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"Bawdy" that Matters: Sexual, Misogynistic, and Scatological Jests in Early Modern England

by

Mark Steven Irvine ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of English

Edmonton, Alberta

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Rick Bowers

Ian Munro

Rosalind Kerr

May 21/2003

Date

Abstract

This thesis attempts to understand sexual, misogynistic, and scatological comedy in early modern England. First, I explore the humour behind a number of "dirty" jests from the period: why the Elizabethans and Jacobeans found certain stock characters in particular lewd situations so funny. I argue that these jokes were popular because they reflect and play with the early moderns' cultural attitudes and anxieties about sex, gender roles, the physical body, public decorum, and morality. Second, I analyze the dramatic application of this humour in the works of Tudor playwright John Heywood. In his debates and farces, he increasingly drew on the jesting tradition, adapting joke characters and plots, as well as recreating the act of storytelling on the stage. I argue that live performance allowed Heywood to expand on the comic potential of a printed or oral gag. His plays bring the jest alive before the audience, engaging them in an audio-visual spectacle of ribald wit.

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Introduction

Dating back to Aristotle, many philosophers have defined the human species by our ability to laugh, the unique behaviour that distinguishes us from other creatures: *animal ridens*. All cultures from every era have created their own forms of humour to laugh at (and cope with) the folly and uncertainty of the world around them. This study looks at a particular form of humour from one society: the lewd, bawdy jokes of early modern England. The jests of this period that involve sexual intercourse, squabbling between men and women, and the physical body can be read as cultural products. That is, they operate by playing with the Elizabethans' and Jacobeans' ingrained attitudes and anxieties about patriarchy and hierarchy, public decorum, and shame. It is important to remember that the basic character types of these jests are themselves ancient. Figures such as the shrewish wife, the foolish husband, and the mischievous trickster have been popular since classical times because they depend on the same longstanding social ideas and tensions. Indeed, many of these traditional jest motifs continue to have currency in modern times; "Kiss my ass," for instance, packs the same derisive punch today as 500 years ago because the anus continues to be a source of embarrassment. Thus, the "dirty" jokes of early modern England are part of larger tradition of bawdy humour. At the same time, they were adapted in specific forms that held appeal and meaning for their particular audience. The gags are old ones, but the style in which they were told was constantly reworked and altered in ways that seemed fresh and innovative.

Chapter One focuses on seventeen English jestbooks published in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, including such notable titles as *A Hundred Merry Tales*, *Tales and Quicke Answers*, and Taylor's *Wit and Mirth*. First, I outline the historical and foreign influences of these jest collections, as well as their relation to oral storytelling. I also outline the key elements of these jokes: although there were some stylistic changes over time, the same stock characters engaging in similar battles of wit with one another are found in all of these compilations. The main goal of this chapter is to categorize

and then analyze the comical stories involving sex, misogyny, the lower body, and excrement. In short, I want to explore why these topics were deemed laughable. Many of the jokes from this period are crudely written and repetitive, with fairly obvious punch lines. Yet upon closer inspection, their operations are much more complex—understanding the humour in these tales, why they were so titillating for early modern audiences, requires an understanding of the culture's deeper ideologies, assumptions, and apprehensions. In order to explain these jests better, I employ three major theories of laughter[1]: the incongruity model, the relief model, and the superiority/degradation model. Each of these attempts to explain the universal essence of mirth and why the same types of humour appeal to any given society. While none of these theories is conclusive by itself, all three in unison can provide us with useful insights into the intricate workings of jokes in an early modern context.

The first theory focuses on incongruity—the surprising, the irrational, and the inappropriate—as the fundamental basis of laughter. Building on the earlier ideas of Aristotle, Cicero, and Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer was one of the foremost proponents of this model. In *The World as Will and Representation* (1819), he holds that laughter

> always signifies the sudden apprehension of an incongruity between such a concept and the real object thought through it, and hence between what is abstract

> and what is perceptive. The greater and more unexpected this incongruity in the apprehension of the person laughing, the more violent will be his laughter. (91)

In other words, laughter is spurred on by an unexpected paradox between how we imagine something to be—its concept in our minds—and how this thing actually exists. When we see something or hear about something that is logically absurd, the intellectual surprise gives us a pleasant sensation; it is "delightful for us to see this strict, untiring, and most troublesome governess, our faculty of reason, for once convicted of inadequacy" (98). Schopenhauer goes on to explain that we laugh at ourselves when our own mental concepts are contradicted by real objects, and we laugh at others when their perceptions are incongruous with actual things. When a person is "*intentionally* ludicrous," this represents "the *joke*" (99).

Renaissance scholars were also familiar with the role that absurdity plays in humour. In *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), the period's seminal manual on courtly etiquette, Baldesar Castiglione similarly observes that laughter "'is nearly always a sign of a certain hilarity inwardly felt in the mind'" (144). The source of this mental hilarity, he argues, is "'in a certain deformity, for we laugh only at those things that have incongruity in them and that seem to be amiss and yet are not'" (145). As we shall see, many bawdy jests involve absurd characters and events that "'seem to be amiss and yet are not.'" In large part, these jokes rely on the incongruity between the expectations of proper behaviour in the early modern period and the ways that men and women actually acted. For instance, in a society that valued patriarchy as the God-given social and economic order of the world, people might expect women to be flawed, and thus behave lustfully or aggressively (as so many female characters do in these jokes). It is comically ludicrous, however, that male characters, such as the cuckold or the henpecked husband, *allow* their wives and daughters to indulge so flagrantly in their "natural" vices.

The other two theories also involve incongruity, but they focus more on the specific content that is absurd and how this content arouses an emotional response. The relief/release model of humour, for instance, is often associated with Sigmund Freud, who attempts to explain the development of joking in *Jokes and Their Relationship to the Unconscious* (1905). First, he argues that children "derive pleasure from the free use of words and thoughts" (137) to create nonsense. The second stage is the "jest," which uses the same notion of silly play but involves the rational arrangement of words and thoughts in some meaningful way, such as a simple pun. "Tendentious jokes"[2] represent the final stage. They are structured in the same manner as jests, but they have hostile or obscene content that allows people to focus on emotions and impulses that society has forced them to suppress through "shame and respectability" (133). Thus, society has placed strict restrictions on sexual and hostile behaviour that are not openly acknowledged or discussed. By comically expressing the forbidden, we release the psychic energy needed under normal, serious moments to contain violent and sexual urges—this "'*economy in expenditure on inhibition or suppression*' appears to be the secret of the pleasurable effect of tendentious jokes" (119).

Mary Douglas builds on Freud's ideas from an anthropological perspective. In *Implicit Meanings* (1975), she defines the joke as "a play of form [. . .] the juxtaposition of a control against that which is controlled, this juxtaposition being such that the latter triumphs" (96). For a joke to be funny, there must be a "joke in the social structure" (98); in other words, the official, dominant hierarchy is challenged by an opposing, subordinate social pattern through humour. She defines these subversive comic tales (and the act of sharing them) as "an anti-rite" (103) because they playfully debase, jumble, and belittle the orthodox ideology and values. Douglas also makes the important distinction between a joke, which is merely a "temporary suspension of the social structure," and an abomination, which "contradicts the basic categories of experience" (107). The former is permissible as a fleeting, harmless expression of freedom from the norm; a society by consensus recognizes it and permits it as "a symbolic pattern of a social pattern occurring at the same time" (98). The latter, by contrast, is feared and despised by all as a very real, more permanent threat to "both the order of reason and the order of society" (107).

Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of folk culture and the carnival provides a different relief model of laughter. In *Rabelais and His World* (1965), he argues that the medieval and Renaissance periods were divided into two contrasting ideologies. The official culture of the Church was based on "intolerant seriousness" (74) and was "infused with elements of fear, weakness, humility, submission, falsehood, hypocrisy" (94). The popular culture was based on the rebellious, gay laughter of the carnival, which "celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (7). An integral part of carnival was the material body principle, "that is, images of the human body with its food, drink, defecation, and sexual life" (18). These images were often artistically expressed through grotesque realism, becoming "grandiose, exaggerated, immeasurable" (19) in the process. According to Bakhtin, grotesque realism "degrades and materializes" (20); it arouses folk laughter to bring everything that is high, sacred, and serious down to earth in an ongoing, utopian cycle of destruction and regeneration.

It is not difficult to see the connections between these relief theories and sexual, misogynistic, and scatological jokes. Sharing bawdy puns, lewd anecdotes, and dirty slang terms allowed early modern people to broach topics that were normally prohibited and considered obscene. Moreover, they offered a brief, light-hearted breakdown of hierarchy, patriarchy, and public decorum. No character, for example, can appear solemn and respectable in a fart gag, regardless or whether he/she breaks wind or is forced to smell the stench of another's gas. All people are degraded by flatulence, even if—*especially* if—they are high in rank. Whereas farting near or on other people has serious, shameful repercussions in the actual world, in the carnivalesque world of the jest such behaviour is often glorified as a rebellious, boisterous sign of wit.

Finally, the superiority theory states that people laugh in order to deride others, especially those who are different from them in behaviour or appearance. The relief theories are similar in the sense that they involve the notion of degradation, but the superiority model focuses more on the socially conservative function of derisive laughter. Thomas Hobbes provides one of the most famous definitions of superior humour in *Leviathan* (1651). He maintains that laughter is a form of self-congratulation, spurred on by our inborn feelings of self-interest and our natural competition with others for ascendancy. When people observe the physical and/or moral faults of others, "the apprehension of some deformed thing in another," they feel a "*Sudden Glory*" and "maketh those grimaces called LAUGHTER" (45-46). Thus, they are glad that they do not possess the same defects, and "by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves" (46). Hobbes also argues that people can laugh at their own faults, as they occurred in the past and they feel superior to their former, weaker selves. However, he contemptuously views laughter as "a sign of pusillanimity": weak men remind themselves of their own abilities only by detecting the faults of others, whereas "great men" work "to help and free others from scorn, and compare themselves only with the most able" (46). Castiglione permits mocking in *The Book of the Courtier*, but only under certain conditions. He advises his readers to "carefully consider the scope and the limits of provoking laughter by derision" (146). It is acceptable to laugh at "a well-turned account of certain slips on the part of some persons—small ones, however, and not deserving of any greater punishment" (150). To appear dignified and gentlemanly, the proper courtier must refrain from mocking unfortunate wretches (who deserve pity), wicked criminals (who deserve harsh castigation), and the very powerful (who deserve respect).

The French philosopher Henri Bergson outlines an intriguing version of the superiority theory based on the argument that laughter is a social corrective, rather than a sign of weakness or hostility in the laugher. Bergson argues in *Laughter* (1900) that the human soul is the "the perfection of suppleness," while the physical body is "a heavy and cumbersome vesture, a kind of irksome ballast which holds down to earth a soul eager to rise aloft" (92). Comedy arises from "*Something mechanical encrusted upon the living*" (84), which calls attention to the clumsy, unthinking body rather than the limber, alert soul. When people forget their alert, conscious souls and allow their character and actions to be guided by automatic habits, they ludicrously resemble machines. This "mechanical inelasticity" (67) causes people to behave in eccentric, rigid, and thus socially undesirable ways, such as when a person is pompously vain or overly idealistic without realizing it. Bergson feels that morality does not determine whether a person behaves sociably or unsociably: "A flexible vice may not be so easy to ridicule as a rigid virtue" (150). Regardless of whether one is virtuous or sinful, he becomes unbearable to those around him because of an automatic, absentminded eccentricity. Laughter steps in as a necessary wake-up call: "Always rather humiliating for the one against whom it is directed, laughter is, really and truly, a kind of social 'ragging'" (148). Bergson explains that in order to carry out this correction, people must silence their emotional response to the comic figure: "the comic demands something like a momentary anesthesia of the heart. Its appeal is to the intelligence, pure and simple" (64). In such cases, penalizing a social peer for rigidity and nonconformity takes precedence over pity and compassion.

The early jestbooks abound in people mocking others for absurd, socially undesirable behaviour: a man who unknowingly allows his wife to cheat on him, a woman who incessantly scolds her spouse, people who unwittingly expose their private body parts in public, and so forth. I have already pointed out that there are key similarities between the relief and superiority theories of laughter; I argue further that certain derisive jokes *reverse* laughter's ability to release tension for certain listeners. A man who suspects his wife's fidelity, for instance, may grow more jealous upon hearing a cuckold joke instead of enjoying a momentary break from patriarchal anxieties. Just as many jest characters are enraged when others embarrass and laugh at them, certain audiences may fear that they too will become a target of derisive laughter from those who feel superior to them. Such a reaction does not negate outright the relief theory, but it does complicate it, revealing that humour can operate in a number of seemingly opposing ways at the same time, often for the same person.

The preceding pages are not, of course, a comprehensive review of all the various explanations of humour and laughter currently available.[3] Nonetheless, they do represent many of the major ideas and provide a flexible framework with which to analyze early modern sexual, misogynistic, and scatological jests. As noted, none of the theories seems wholly adequate on its own: there are many exceptions to every rule, and many jokes involve some or all of the models functioning at the same time. Some jokes are subversive, some are conservative, and many contain elements of both. Chris Holcomb observes "the difficulty in determining the subject matter and function" of jests, which "are inherently ambiguous and thus resist efforts to stabilize their meaning and effect. [. . .] there is no guarantee what meaning, or meanings, [people] will attribute" (81). I employ the notions of incongruity, relief, and superiority in order to point out the various different types of bawdy jests but more importantly to explore the intricate, tangled web of cultural meanings they can have, often depending on who is the teller and who is the listener. Men, women, the upper classes, the lower classes—all shared key cultural beliefs and ideals, but their divergent positions within England's power structure influenced the specific purpose and significance that "dirty" jokes had for them.

Explaining how these comical stories were considered funny is only one of my two primary aims in this study. Chapter Two is concerned with the *performance* of these jests. Although it is very difficult to trace how ribald anecdotes and puns were shared orally in marketplaces, taverns, and households, it is much more workable to explore the dramatic applications of joke humour. Many modern critics have outlined the influence of French farce in the interludes of John Heywood (c.1497-1578), the famed wit and court entertainer for Henry VIII, Mary I, Edward VI, and (briefly) Elizabeth I. However, there has been relatively little discussion of the ways in which he adapted jestbook material for the Tudor stage. By doing so, Heywood created exuberant secular comedies that were entirely unique in England for his time.

Heywood's six known plays—*Witty and Witless* (an unprinted manuscript), *A Play of Love* (1534), *The Play of the Wether* (1533), *The Foure PP* (c.1544), *The Pardoner and the Frere* (1533), and *Johan Johan* (1533)—can be loosely grouped as three debates and three farces. These interludes were probably written between 1519 and 1528, and although we do not know for certain the order in which they were written, there does seem to be a comedic development throughout them. The debates, which are meant to instruct, use humour as a digression from the serious dialogue between characters that investigates a humanist idea. Increasingly, comedy becomes the highlight: the farces have little or no intellectual content, and instead they focus on the hilarious, often scurrilous battles of wit between adversaries.

Heywood's plays reflect the influence of jests in three ways. First, he adapts certain jestbook figures, such as the mischievous, bawdy-minded trickster. Second, he borrows many joke story lines and scenes. In the debates, there is very little plot besides characters arguing ideas. In the farces, there is more dramatic, jest-style action, such as a husband fighting with his whorish, domineering wife and her lover. Both of these features are also found in the French farces from which Heywood borrowed; both the farce and the jest, after all, are branches of the same bawdy tradition of humour. The final influence, however, seems to be unique to jokes. Three of Heywood's interludes contain jesting situations in which characters tell comical anecdotes to the audience and other characters in order to entertain, outwit, and control how they are perceived by those around them. Heywood carefully and realistically crafts these situations, in a sense recreating onstage the familiar act of orally sharing a joke in the street, at home, at church, or at court.

I argue further that Heywood's dramatic use of jokes has a profound effect on their comic potential. He animates the jest characters and plots for his audience, engaging them and interacting with them both visually and audibly through a stampede of lewd gestures, asides, grimaces, shouts, dances, props, and fisticuffs. Moreover, he develops certain characters beyond the stock jest type, allowing them to display moments of genuine emotion. Thus, the audience's response becomes engrossingly complex as they shift between sympathizing with these "real" individuals and laughing at their absurdly foolish antics. As a skilled entertainer, Heywood is well acquainted with the various operations of jokes: their ability to point out the irrational and the preposterous, to alleviate the pressure of obeying rules of social decorum, and to deride those who fail to behave properly. He masterfully combines all these functions onstage in a lively, slapstick, and hilarious spectacle not possible through reading or orally sharing a simple gag.

To summarize, the first section of this paper employs the incongruity, relief, and superiority models of laughter to explore the various workings and meanings of scurrilous jests. Having explained how these jokes trigger laughter in audiences, I analyze the ways in which Heywood vividly manipulates for the stage these comical tales and the social act of telling them.

Chapter 1: Early English Jests and Jestbooks

F.P. Wilson defines the early modern jestbook as "a collection of comic prose tales or anecdotes designed for entertainment" (286).[1] In examining these books, the modern reader may be struck by two features: the lack of originality and the coarse, crude style of writing. According to P.M. Zall, the English jestbooks cannot be classified as "'literary'" because they are more concerned with "what is said than with how it is said" (A Hundred Merry Tales 1). Nonetheless, they provide valuable and intriguing glimpses into the social nature of the Elizabethans and the Jacobeans. We can see in them characters from a broad spectrum of classes and backgrounds interacting and grappling with one another in the course of ordinary life: men and women, country folk and town dwellers, servants and masters, the noble and the lowly.

The first two sections of this chapter provide background information about the early jokebooks and the jest genre. I begin by outlining the foreign, historical origins of these stories, and then I explain some of their key features: the basic character types and plots, the developing writing styles, and some of the various social uses for jesting. The primary focus of this chapter is on jokes involving the sexual act, infidelity, animosity between men and women, public nudity, and the functions of the lower body. Using the three theories of humour outlined above (incongruity, relief, superiority), I explore exactly why these "merry jests," "pleasant conceits," and "witty shifts" are funny. I argue that, despite their apparent simplicity and good-natured fun, they reflect and respond to early modern ideas and fears about appropriate social behaviour, class relations, and gender roles in complex ways.

Historical Sources and Influences

One of the earliest joke collections came in the twelfth century with the *Disciplina Clericalis* by the priest Petrus Alphonsus. This anthology of thirty-four parables borrows popular, longstanding tales from Arabian, Jewish, Persian, Greek, and Indian societies (Wardroper 16; Zall, A Hundred Merry Tales 5). The stories, with their accompanying moral explanations, are intended as exempla to help priests teach right from wrong and to capture the attention of their listeners. As Alphonsus explains in his prologue,

> I have also considered the infirmity of man's physical nature which makes it necessary to break up instruction into small sections so that boredom does not set in. Also I have been mindful of the fact that in order to facilitate remembrance of what has been learnt, the pill must be softened and sweetened by various means. (104)

One of Alphonsus' major Arabic sources is the *Book of the Wiles and Contrivances of Women* (Hermes 7). Thus, many of the parables depict unruly wife characters who are entertaining but also serve as clear warnings against female cunning.

Alphonsus' tales became extremely popular across Western Europe in the medieval period, providing subject material and inspiration for later exempla writers. In France, their influence can also be seen in the fabliaux of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the group of comical verse narratives often featuring avarice, infidelity, trickery, excrement, and dirty language (Zall, A Hundred Merry Tales 5). John Hines explains that, while the exemplum is generally more explicitly moralistic than the fabliau, both genres are closely related, so that "the basic tales that could be recomposed as fabliaux could circulate as *exempla*" (213). The Italian novella, or short prose narrative, developed in the same vein at roughly the same time. The most prominent novelle are found in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, a collection of one hundred tales written sometime between 1348 and 1354, framed by the story of ten narrators travelling from Florence to the countryside to escape the plague. Several anecdotes in the *Decameron* depict already familiar topics that continued to be popular later in the English jestbooks: adulterous wives deceiving their husbands, husbands suspicious of their wives' fidelity, lecherous clerics, wicked widows, and so forth.[2] Finally, Chaucer holds a significant place within this comic tradition. Particularly in *The Canterbury Tales* (written between 1386 and 1400), he borrows the imaginative framing structure for his stories from Boccaccio, and adapts fabliaux characters and plots with racy brilliance.[3]

Perhaps the most famous jestbook of the Renaissance, and the one with the most significant impact on English compilations, was written in the following century by Poggio Bracciolini, the famed humanist scholar. He based his *Liber Facetiarum* on the humorous tales told among his fellow papal secretaries in Rome. In his prologue, Poggio defends his jests, many of which are scurrilous and sexually explicit, as part of a time-honoured tradition among men of intelligence and wit:

> I think there will be many who will condemn these anecdotes [. . .]. But it seems to me that I shall have done enough to regain their good opinion when I answer such critics, that I have read our elders, very wise and learned men, who took a keen delight in humorous tales and fables, for which they were praised rather than blamed. (11)

Many of the facetiae are taken from the *Disciplina Clericalis* (as well as classical and Eastern sources), but with a significant difference. Poggio is more interested in the entertainment value of the stories than in any real didactic use; he thus discards or at times parodies the moral explanations that conclude the medieval exempla (Zall, A Hundred Merry Tales 6). Manuscripts of the *Liber Facetiarum* spread quickly across Europe from around the mid-fifteenth century, long before the book's printing in 1477.

All of these past collections supplied the types of jests, and many of the actual jests themselves, found in early modern English jokebooks.[4] As Herman Roodenburg notes (referring to early Dutch collections), "many of the narratives included in the jest-books were not bound to local or national culture, and circulated all over Europe in a lively international exchange" (114). Many of the oldest English compilations certainly reflect past and foreign influences. The first was *The Fables of Alfonce and Poge*, printed in 1484 by William Caxton. He includes thirteen tales from Alphonsus and ten from Poggio, along with three seemingly of his own creation (Zall, A Hundred Merry Tales 6, 12). Although a number of comical verse pamphlets were produced after 1484, the next prose jestbook was *A Hundred Merry Tales*, anonymously written and first printed in 1526. A small number of these gags can be traced back to Alphonsus, Boccaccio, Poggio, the fabliaux, and other Continental sources. The majority, however, seem to have originated locally, probably deriving from popular oral witticisms and fables. According to Zall, *A Hundred Merry Tales* is "the closest thing we have to a distinctively native English jestbook" (A Hundred Merry Tales 8).[5] Another significant early collection, *Howleglas*, first appeared around 1528. A high-spirited rogue with a great love of turds, Howleglas is the English version of Til Eulenspiegel, a popular German clown of the late fifteenth century. Both characters are part of a longer tradition of fables featuring tricksters, often commoners, who use their wit to deceive and insult others, particularly the upper classes and authority figures (Zall, A Hundred Merry Tales 6-7). Finally, *Tales and Quicke Answers* (c.1535 and enlarged in 1567) borrows almost entirely from early humanist sources, such as the humour of Erasmus and, of course, Poggio (Wardroper 8). Although a number of the *Tales and Quicke Answers* involve foreign historical figures and are set in far-off locales, many have been adapted specifically for an English audience. Certain stories, for instance, take place in London and its surroundings, and others have been rewritten to include notable English personages, such as John Skelton and Richard III.

In his compilation of early modern jestbooks, Victorian critic W. Carew Hazlitt, complains that joke "literature has never done anything but repeat itself over and over again [. . .] and in the whole circle of modern jest-books there is not probably a single anecdote, or a single witticism which has the slenderest pretension to originality" (6).[6] This censure is perhaps overly harsh; certain collections are notable for their unique, creative material, including George Wilkins and Thomas Dekker's *Jests to Make You Merry* (1607) and John Taylor's *Wit and Mirth* (1629) (Wilson 291). Yet the bulk of the Elizabethan and Jacobean jests were taken undeniably from other sources. A few, such as Thomas Deloney's *The Mirrour of Mirth* (1583) and Anthony Copley's *Wits, Fits, and Fancies* (1634), are translations of Continental books. Many more collections from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries borrowed frequently from each other and especially from the original English jestbooks mentioned above. Howleglas, for instance, is the forerunner of later prankster figures, including John Skelton, Richard Tarlton, and John Scogin. *A Hundred Merry Tales* and *Tales and Quicke Answers*, in particular, served as ready supplies of wit from which later jestbook writers drew, sometimes copying the joke verbatim or simply making slight alterations to character and setting.

One of the many examples of this repetition is Tale #63 of *A Hundred Merry Tales*, in which a proctor of Arches is asked why he chose a wife so small in stature. The proctor, lacking common sense, responds that he has married this woman because a book has taught him: "'Ex duobus malis minus malum est eliendum'— that is to say in English: 'Among evil things, the least is to be chosen'" (121). *Certayne Conceyts & Jeasts* (1614) copies this joke but replaces the proctor with a nondescript man who is questioned about his little wife by Aristotle. He comes up with his answer on his own, not from a Latin text: "Since that I was to make choyce out of things that were euill, I thought it most wisedome to choose the least" (8). The same story appears again in Robert Chamberlain's *Conceits, Clinches, Flashes and Whimzies* (1639), yet it is much shorter, with little detail about the man, his companion, and his wife: "One perswaded his friend to marry a little woman, because of evils the least was to be chosen" (24).

Certainly, many writers borrowed jests by reading earlier collections and then imitating them. Yet it also seems possible that writers could have unknowingly repeated printed jokes. Several claimed to have first *heard* the stories that they later related to their readers. The title page of Taylor's *Wit and Mirth* (1629), for example, explains that the gags were "Chargeably Collected Out of Taverns, Ordinaries, Innes, Bowling-Greenes and Allyes, Alehouses, Tobacco-shops, Highwayes, and Water-passages. Made up, and fashioned into Clinches, Bulls, Quirkes, Yerkes, Quips, and Jerkes" (2). As a waterman on the Thames and a frequent traveller around England, Taylor had many opportunities to share jests aloud with a wide array of people. From such sources, then, the best stories could be assembled and polished ("Made up, and fashioned") for printing. In his dedication, he apologizes for any similarity his collection may share with others: "And because I had many of them by relation and heare-say, I am in doubt that some of them may be in print in some other Authors, which I doe assure you is more than I doe know" (3). The compiler of *A Banquet of Jests* (1657) makes a similar claim: "If many have heard some of [my jests], yet few or none (I dare presume) all. Besides, I do not challenge them for my own, but gathered from the mouths of others, and what is stale to me, may be to thee new" (170). It seems possible, then, that there was a kind of evolutionary struggle in jesting; we can presume that the sign of a joke's popularity was the fact that it was rehashed over and over again. These were regularly, but only slightly, updated with new characters and settings, yet still retained their basic comedic appeal. In effect, one could argue that the jestbook writers were giving their audiences what they wanted: their old favourites done up in new styles.

Types, General Content, Changing Styles, and Audiences

The English jestbooks can be divided into three broad groups. The first and largest category includes the collections of short, detached gags about a range of different people from various social classes. The second type is jest-biographies, which feature anecdotes loosely based on the tricks and pranks of a central figure, often following him from birth to death but with minimal character development. *Howleglas* represents the first jest-biography in English, but many more followed, often basing the hero on an actual person with a well-known reputation for clowning. Some jests are presumably based on the actual events in this person's life, but most seem to be detached-style gags that simply implant a famous comic's name in order to attract readers. The third type is the novelle, which tell longer, more detailed narratives rather than quick gags. Wilson counts only four comic novelle in English: *The Mirrour of Mirth* (1583), *Tarlton's News out of Purgatory* (1590), *The Cobbler of Canterbury* (1590), and *Westward for Smelts* (1620) (305).

Regardless of their category, most jokes involve a fool and/or a wit. In certain anecdotes, a character reveals himself or herself to be immoral or idiotic, and thus worthy of being scorned by readers and often by other characters within the story. In Tale #52 of *A Hundred Merry Tales*, for instance, a young man stupidly speaks out of turn in church after mishearing the curate: "The curate hearing this was abashed, and all the audience made great laughter" (112). In other tales, one character uses insults and deceptions to reveal the foolishness or vice of another, thus directing the laughter towards this person. Chris Holcomb notes that in the ancient Greek and Roman courtesy handbooks dealing with the proper uses of humour, "the typical jesting situation consists of two rival orators of roughly the same social status engaged in a battle of wits." In early modern handbooks and jestbooks, however, the situations "involve encounters between people of divergent social origins and occupations" (24). Indeed, the jests of this period feature an incredible range of people interacting and quarrelling under everyday circumstances: beggars, tradesmen, courtiers, peasants, poets and players, kings, soldiers, bishops, friars, drunks, children and parents, mayors, judges, husbands and wives, and so forth. There are certain backgrounds and occupations that are most often targeted for ridicule: people from the countryside are mainly depicted as unlearned or irrational, especially in their dealings with city dwellers; foreigners, especially the Welsh, almost always appear unrefined and boorish in the face of English customs; and clergyman are either ignorant or hypocritically sinful.

Yet there are many exceptions to the rule: a poor beggar, for instance, could as easily mock a courtier as vice versa. Early modern jests are predominantly concerned with what Dekker and Wilkins describe as "the bubling up of wit" (273) rather than with morality. Put simply, those who are cleverest win in the world of the jests, and those who lack wit become the butt of laughter. The moral tags found in early collections such as *A Hundred Merry Tales* and *Tales and Quicke Answers* ("By this ye may see [. . .]") often seem forced and unpersuasive, attempting to impose virtue on a situation where there is little. These jests also rate wit higher than social status. As Keith Thomas argues, laughter in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries could "deflate the pretensions of rank and social hierarchy," as well as "dissipate the reverence upon which the authority of religion depended" (79). Yet jestbook writers and comic dramatists should not be considered revolutionaries. For instance, when gentlemen are displayed mockingly as fools or sinners, the intent is not to attack nobility in general, but rather those "'whose follies and whose vices render their titles ridiculous'" (John Dennis, qtd. in Thomas 79).

The true sin in jests is not to behave wickedly; rather, it is to lack the cleverness to act immorally and get away with it.

The common character types of jokes changed little over time: figures such as the country bumpkin, the cuckolded husband, and the uncouth Welshman remained popular long into the seventeenth century. One notable difference, however, was that jests involving the Church and corrupt clergymen gradually declined in number. After the Protestant Reformation and the rise of Puritan thought, English authorities increasingly sought to suppress derisive laughter against religion in any form, including jesting and the annual carnivals and rites of misrule that had a long history of burlesquing the solemnity of the Church (Thomas 79).

Stylistically, jokes underwent more pronounced changes and innovations. First, whereas many of the sixteenth century jestbooks were written anonymously, in the seventeenth century more writers proudly included their names with their work. Just as well-known figures became heroes of jest-biographies, many of these new writers could also exploit their reputations in order to increase sales. John Taylor the Water Poet, for instance, was famous as a professional entertainer and the writer of pamphlets and travel books; George Wilkins and Thomas Dekker were also established pamphleteers, as well as well-known playwrights (Zall, A Nest of Ninnies x). Second, whereas the early jestbooks often concluded their stories with instructive tags similar to the medieval exempla, later collections took the path of Poggio and left their jokes to stand for themselves without any didactic pretence. Finally, there was a growing trend to make jests more concise and biting. By reducing the amount of relatively extraneous detail about character and setting, writers could focus more on the quick turn of phrase or witty answer and thus sharpen the comical punch[7] (Zall, A Nest of Ninnies x). As Wilkins and Dekker explain, "A jest is tried as powder is: the most sudden is the best" (273).

English joke collections grew immensely popular in the early modern period. Zall speculates that "It would not be surprising, then, if more people read jestbooks than read the works of Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton combined" (A Nest of Ninnies ix). While there were only a relative handful of collections produced in the sixteenth century, dozens more were printed in the seventeenth century because of cheaper printing costs and increased literacy (Zall, A Nest of Ninnies ix). Moreover, a number of jestbooks were reprinted many times long after their first edition. Andrew Borde's *The Jests of Scogin*, for instance, was first printed as early as c.1565, and again in 1613, in 1626 (the earliest edition still existing), in 1680, and again in 1796 (Hazlitt Vol. 2, 38-39). The illiterate masses would not have been excluded from such entertainment. If many jokes originated from oral sources before they were printed, then printed jests could also spread quickly by sharing them aloud in the tavern, the market, family homes, and so forth.

There was a growing trend in the seventeenth century, and especially in the eighteenth century, to separate polite humour fit for the upper classes from traditional folk humour. Keith Thomas argues that "By 1700 the jest-books, which had once amused scholar and peasant alike," now appeared "vulgar" (80) to the learned and refined. Yet in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, joke collections still appealed to a large section of the upper class and clergy. Many scholars and gentlemen, such as Robert Burton, Samuel Pepys, and Bishop Moore of Ely, amassed jests and jestbooks in their personal collections; other gentlemen, such as Sir Nicholas Le Strange and again Pepys, created their own jestbook manuscripts (Brewer 98). The gap between the popular and the elite was doubtlessly widening in the 1600s, but many of the same comical topics continued to amuse both the low and the high alike.

The primary function of the jestbooks was to entertain oneself or one's company, both through reading stories or telling them aloud. Many Renaissance scholars posited their own version of a relief theory of humour based the perceived health benefits of mirth. Laurent Joubert, the French medical writer, maintains in his *Treatise on Laughter* (1579) that people's intellects occasionally become "overworked and tired due to serious occupations" (94). Thus, God provides laughter as "recreation in order to conveniently loosen the reins of [the] mind" (95). Joubert feels that an individual's good spirits are necessary to preserve public order: laughter allows "man to be a sociable, civil, and gracious animal, such that one might live and converse pleasantly and benignly with another." Many early modern jestbook writers (along with playwrights) defended their works with this same notion of mental rejuvenation. Thomas Deloney argues in his prologue to *The Mirrour of Mirth* that "mirth and melody cutteth off care, unburdeneth the mind of sorrow, healeth the grieved heart, and filleth both soul and body with inestimable comfort." Thus, he offers his "rude and simple work" for the "recreation" (353) of his readers' minds. Robert Chamberlain claims that *Conceits, Clinches, Flashes, and Whimzies* is "purposely intended to promote harmlesse mirth." He hopes that his "Gentle Reader" will be "as merry in the reading as [he] and some other of [his] friends were in speaking of them" (5).

For gentlemen and clergymen, jests could also serve other practical purposes. First, many English rhetorical and courtesy manuals, such as George Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* (1589) and Thomas Wilson's *Art of Rhetoric* (1560), recommend that orators employ jests in order to handle specific situations at court, albeit under strict rules of decorum. Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), which heavily influenced later English manuals, devotes most the Second Book to outlining how a gentleman may best employ humour—the appropriate topics for quips and anecdotes, the polite manner in which to tell them, and their proper audience:

> 'Therefore, if the Courtier, with his banter and witticisms, has regard for time, person, and his own rank, and takes care not to use them too often [. . .] he may be called a humorous man; and if he takes care also not to be so sharp and biting that he be known as malicious and as one who attacks without cause or with evident rancor either those who are very powerful, which is imprudent; or those who are too weak, which is cruel; or those who are too wicked, which is useless; or says things that offend persons who he would not wish to offend, which is ignorance.'
>
> (179)

In short, gentlemen should use humour only in ways that befit their stature; if they strive too hard to be "'jolly good fellows'" (134), then they risk losing their all-important dignity in exchange for cheap laughs. Holcomb argues that in the early modern court setting, at a time when increasing social mobility threatened traditional definitions of hierarchy, "the courtier primarily uses jesting to preserve or enhance his own ethos, to present a self that is socially elevated and clearly distinguishable from that of 'commune jesters'" (66). In other words, if one followed certain rules of conduct, such as making wit appear effortless and using jests sparingly, then he could display his natural superiority over social climbers and especially over uncouth buffoons.

These manuals were careful to advise gentlemen against obscene (that is, sexual and scatological) jokes deemed unfit for good company. Castiglione, for instance, criticizes the use of "'dirty words'" (150), and he chastizes those men who "'say the dirtiest and most indecent things, in the presence of ladies and often to the ladies themselves'" (133). Yet the fact that he feels the need to issue such warnings at all perhaps demonstrates that obscene comedy was popular in practice among both the upper and the lower classes. A courtier may have followed the advice of these handbooks and shunned dirty jests at public moments when it was necessary to cultivate an outward appearance of dignity and breeding. Yet in private moments, gentlemen (and ladies) could allow themselves more licence. Poggio, for instance, describes that he and his peers shared ribald tales at "an *isolated* part of the papal court" (163, emphasis mine). At this secluded location, they felt free to amuse themselves by breaking many of the manuals' rules about showing restraint and avoiding indecency: "There nobody was spared; we seized upon everything which gave us cause for displeasure, and often it was the pope himself upon whom our first censure fell, so that each one of us was in constant fear that he would be the next to be brought up for ridicule" (163). According to Barry Sanders, having jests available in print aided this indulgence: "Jokebooks made duplicity possible. Aristocrats could take delight in reading in privacy about freaks and marginal characters, while maintaining a public stance free from such obvious bad taste" (212).

Borrowing from the teaching of medieval scholars such as Petrus Alphonsus, many defended jesting from the pulpit because it secured the goodwill of congregations and thus made them more receptive to moral instruction.[9] Jests could be used as simple attention-grabbers, or they could provide examples of the sermon lesson. A few jokes in *A Hundred Merry Tales* attempt to go even farther as didactic tools. Tale #57, for instance, mocks a confused simpleton who recites the seven deadly sins when he is asked to recite the ten commandments, thus demonstrating that it is shameful to be ignorant of religious matters. The moral tag also claims that repeating the story could correct this very ignorance in the teller: "By reading this tale *ye may learn to know* the ten commandments and the seven deadly sins" (117, emphasis mine). The use of jesting in church, however, was a controversial topic. Radical Protestants and Puritans largely condemned the practice as a frivolous, Catholic embellishment to sacred matters. As the Puritan William Perkins argues, "it is not meet, convenient or laudable for men to move occasion of laughter in Sermons" (qtd. in Holcomb 65). Even many of those that supported the practice had reservations. Thomas More and Erasmus, for instance, sanction preachers' use of jests, but they regret that people need such refreshment when learning about God (Holcomb 47-51). Similar to courtiers, a certain decorum was required from the clergy: preachers were expected to use jests only when necessary, and they were advised not to use those offensive to taste (such as bawdy or scatological jokes). Otherwise, they would have risked appearing clownish or, even worse, immoral.

It is important to acknowledge these jesting rules against indecent humour that were laid out for both gentlemen and clergymen. As I have indicated, however, these expectations do not necessarily translate into practical reality. These warnings existed *because* a wide spectrum of people from all backgrounds enjoyed racy, coarse gags. The jestbook writers' success, after all, depended on meeting the demands of their readers. Thus, the large number of sexual, misogynistic, and scatological gags that were published is an indication of their popularity. For the remainder of this chapter, I explore the distinguishing features and inner workings of these jests, with the assumption that, while they did not appeal to all tastes and were not meant for every occasion, they were indeed prevalent and well liked.

Bawdy, Scold, and Body Humour

In this section I classify three types of jests based on content. The first includes jokes about sex, the vast majority of which involve illegal or immoral practices, such as adultery and premarital intercourse. The second type includes jests that criticize and mock unruly women, most often for their hostility after they are married; these gags present stereotypical shrews and scolds who make life miserable for their husbands. Many of the sexual jokes also feature husbands and wives fighting, but in this second type the humour depends more on women's scornful behaviour and disagreeable nature rather than on any sexual act. The third type involves exposure of the lower body (primarily the buttocks but also genitalia) and its functions, such as excreting waste and passing gas. The seventeen collections analyzed for this section represent all three classes of jestbook (that is, detached stories, jest-biographies, and comic novelle), comprising over 1300 jokes. Approximately 13% involve sex, 5% concern marriage and women, and 6% involve excrement and nudity.[8]

It is important to note that there is no uniform distribution of these types of jokes within concern a husband being cuckolded, but none deride women or describe bodily functions. *Howleglas*, on the other hand, features only two jests about sex and only one about women's irritability, but it includes eleven about turds, arses, and farts. Furthermore, there does not appear to be any changing trends over time with respect to these three types of jokes. Some may be featured more than others in a particular collection, but throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries they all can be found in abundance, with the same topics, characters, and basic gags repeated again and again.

I. Sexual Jokes–Cuckoldry

By far the majority of sexual jests involve cuckolding, when a wife cheats on her spouse with another man; the word "cuckold" derives from the name of a promiscuous female bird and was commonly associated with the symbol of horns growing from the beguiled husband's head (Kishlansky 475). The sheer number of jests involving adultery, and the many various cuckold scenarios and characters, suggest that the early moderns were intensely delighted by the prospect of a man losing control of his wife's sexuality. "The Cobbler's Tale" in *The Cobbler of Canterbury* lists eight different classifications of the cuckold based on the particular situation and disposition of the unfortunate husband. A "Cuckold Incontinent," for example, marries a woman who is so "light" (or lewd) that "she maketh him a Cuckold the very first day of his marriage." A "Cuckold by consent" is the "most infamous" because he is aware of his horns "but tollereth his wife up in her follies" (20-21). Infidelity jests are numerous and varied; they can be long or short, about things said or about things done, and depict men from all different social classes being betrayed by women—a husband's jealousy is thus one of the great equalizers.

Oftentimes the husband is duped without his knowledge, involving some kind of deception on the part of his wife and her lover. In the third tale of *The Sack-full of Newes* (c.1557), for instance, an old man is hoodwinked by his young wife and one of his male servants: his wife confesses to her husband (as part of her scheme) that the servant had made sexual advances and wants to meet her in the garden that evening. In order to trap and confront this wanton menial, the old man dresses in his wife's clothes and awaits him in the garden, not realizing that he has provided the rascal with the opportunity to sneak into his mistress's bed and do "what he would with her" (170). Afterwards, the servant proceeds to the garden and, pretending to believe that his disguised master is really his mistress, beats him and calls him a whore for agreeing to meet with him. Certainly the old man getting cuckolded is the main point of the joke, but what is more ridiculous is that in addition to receiving his horns, he also takes a beating and is *happy* about it: he foolishly believes that his wife and servant are both loyal to him and were only trying to prove the other party's guilt.

In numerous other jests, the humour comes when the husband is shocked to find out that his wife is promiscuous. In Jest #55 of *Wit and Mirth*, "a Lusty Miller" sleeps with numerous maids and female servants, who all promise to bring him a cake whenever he gets married. When he finally does so, his bride asks him why he has received ninety-nine cakes from these “free-hearted wenches.” When he answers truthfully (and seemingly with pride), the wife responds, “if I had beene so wise in bargaining as you have beene in your time, the young men of my acquaintance would have sent me 100 cheeses to eat with your cakes” (36). In this jest, premarital intercourse works much the same as adultery: the early modern belief that a woman should engage in sex with only one partner during her lifetime is comically foiled. The audience can laugh at the Miller in the same way as at a cuckold because he so abruptly finds out about his wife’s lust, but only after he has been bound to her through marriage. The joke is funnier because the former rogue is treated with his own medicine: he is cheated of the model wife as he himself robbed many young women of their virtue. The concluding poem reads, “This bawdy Miller in a trap was catch[t], / Not onely married, but most fitly match[t]” (36).

In many other jests, adultery may not actually take place, yet the threat of infidelity is nevertheless foremost in the minds of male characters. In Jest #110 of *Gratiae Ludentes* (1638), for instance, a man is “too jealous of his wives honesty,” and thus spies on her wherever she goes. She tells him angrily that if he does not stop following her, “she would clappe such a paire of hornes upon his he[a]d, that from henceforth he should not bee able to put his head out of the doores.” As several jokes demonstrate, a husband’s suspicion of his wife is often merited, but he must also keep a close watch on his male neighbours. In the stories that describe two people planning a sexual liaison, a married woman is only occasionally the initiator of such wantonness. In the majority of cases, another man in close contact with the woman, such as a servant, a tenant, or someone in the local community, is portrayed as the seducer.[9]

As mentioned, the clergy were notorious for partaking in vices that the Church banned for others, especially in matters of sex. Thus, many jests depict priests and friars with wives, mistresses, and their illicit offspring. Many others characterize clergymen as libertines who frequently help to cuckold other men, in large part because their occupation affords them what many husbands dread: time to be alone and in private with their wives. "The Sumner's Tale" in *The Cobbler of Canterbury* describes a "lusty" Abbot who "coueted to acquaint himself with all the faire wiues in the towne, insomuch that euery man doubted of this iolly Clarke" (78). He falls in love with one woman whose husband is so distrustful that he confines her to the house and beats her. Ironically, the Abbot promises her that he will cure her spouse's jealousy if she will be his "paramour" (78). In the end, the Abbot drugs the man, lays him in a tomb, and convinces him he is in purgatory. The frightened fellow is only released when he promises to repent and grant his wife more liberty (which, of course, allows her to continue her lecherous affair with the cleric).

The fourth tale of *The Mirrour of Mirth* depicts an old man who marries a young woman, "wanton and full of pleasure" (7). When his friends inform him that she has had many sexual partners, he conjures up a "most expedient and necessary" (8) remedy. Rather than rebuke her in private or lock her up, he publicly reports his wife's misdeeds to her entire family and implores her (with biting irony) at least to use the side entrance when letting her lovers into the house: "When the young wife had heard the talk that her husband had made unto her in the presence of her parents and friends, she began to be ashamed of her doings [. . .] and afterwards lived with her husband like an honest and virtuous wife" (8). This jest is unusual in that the cuckold is able to get the better of his unchaste spouse in the end. In the vast majority of other cases, the cheated husband is the butt of the joke and the woman's sin goes unpunished; he is either foolish on his own, prompting his wife to take on other lovers, or he is turned into a fool by the trickery of a clever wife and her sly suitor. The comic potential of a man with a wanton partner, then, takes precedence in most stories over conventional morality. In situations where a man finds out he has been beguiled, the humour is most often not about him correcting his wife and setting things right; rather, the laughter is directed at his resulting surprise, humiliation, and anger. Even in the above example of the old man reforming his whorish spouse, it is not funny merely when he finds out about his wife's wickedness and decides to change her. The audience only laughs when he is clever enough to embarrass his wife in front of her family. This man is a fool for marrying such a younger woman so unfit for him (mentally and especially physically), but even in disgrace he wins because he asserts greater wit than his wife.

On the surface, sexual jests appear to be quite simple: they are often crudely written and their butts are easily discernible. Yet the deeper ways in which they operated in the minds of early modern audiences seem much more complex and worthy of analysis. On one level, sexual jests can be explained under Bergson's model of social correction. Marital fidelity was considered essential in the Middle Ages and Renaissance in preserving order: under the natural hierarchy, the husband, as a superior creature, was automatically expected by God to command the obedience of his wife, who was just as automatically considered intellectually and morally inferior. As Saint Paul teaches, "the head of every man is Christ; and the head of every woman *is* the man [. . .]. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (1 Cor. 11: 3, 8-9). Any male, peasant or noble, who allowed his wife to neglect her marital obligations was thus stripped of masculinity and, in the case of sexual misconduct, risked losing the legitimacy of his lineage. Signor Ottaviano Fregoso, one of the speakers in *The Book of the Courtier,* sums up this prevailing anxiety among early modern men: "'And it was chastity that seemed more needful for [women] than any other quality, in order for us to be certain of our offspring; hence, it was necessary to use our wits, art, and all possible ways, to make women chaste'" (189).

As Thomas points out, popular laughter in the early modern period "could be a powerful source of social cohesion" (77). In European towns and villages, people lived in close quarters to one another without the modern sense of personal privacy; one's actions (and crimes) were the common knowledge of family and neighbours. In such an environment, "mockery and derision were indispensable means of preserving established values and condemning unorthodox behaviour" (Thomas 77). The French charivari and English skimmington, for example, combined popular festivity and civic control. Mobs used insults, laughter, noisemaking, parades, and often physical violence to shame publicly a variety of marital offenders: elderly men who married young women (thus stealing them away from available young men), adulterers, disorderly wives, and husbands who had failed to defend their God-given superiority (Sanders 153). Sexual jests operate in the same manner as a form of "social 'ragging'" (148), as Bergson terms it. The audience goes through "a momentary anesthesia of the heart" (64) towards the cuckold and can only laugh at his inability to conform himself and his wife to expectations of desirable sexual behaviour. Even though the wife and her lover behave wickedly, the cheated husband is most often the butt of the joke because he has failed in his traditional patriarchal duty. When the man's class (either high or low) is mentioned in the jest, it seems to provide an added layer of humour, depending on the audience. Lower class people could take pleasure in laughing at the marital follies of their social betters, and the upper classes could laugh at the foolishness and sinfulness of their inferiors.

The notion of sexual jests as derisive tools can be simultaneously explained under the relief theory of humour. The jests' open presentation of marital infidelity (as well as other sexual taboos, such as premarital sex) offers a form of release for the audience. The jests are conservative in that they scorn eccentricity, but they also present a world in which the social hierarchies are turned upside-down: women do not obey the social constraints placed on them to be loving, loyal wives. Rather, they very easily and regularly employ great cleverness to deceive their husbands and indulge in their bodily desires, which explains why these constraints exist in the first place. As Bakhtin explains, popular laughter senses "the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities"; it recognizes a "'world inside out,'" in which there is "a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear" (11). The rebellious, licentious behaviour of these female characters may be fiercely scorned in the actual world, but the jests allow a momentary break from the orthodox. Audiences can, for a brief moment, laugh playfully at an otherwise serious and lamentable topic: a husband who should be the "head" of his household, but who allows his wife's lust to topple him down.

It also seems equally plausible that these jests work not only as a release of social tension, but also as a means of channelling, even *increasing*, this same tension, depending on the individual listener. As Castiglione warns his readers, "'in all kinds one has to consider that state of mind of the hearers, because jests often bring greater affliction to the afflicted'" (179). For a man who is secure in the faithfulness of his wife, laughing at a cuckold would indeed be a feeling of "*Sudden Glory*" (Hobbes 45): I'm happy because *that* man is not masculine and *I* am. Yet for one who suspects his wife and distrusts his neighbours, a cuckold joke may remind him of the precariousness of his "natural" superiority as a husband. As noted, many jests centre on a husband's feelings of insecurity and suspicion, regardless of whether or not his wife has committed any crime. This suggests that such anxieties were widely felt in a culture that placed so much importance on patriarchal control and sexual chastity. Even the very word "cuckold" could be a serious insult, both in the jests and in actual society. In Tale #20 of *Tarlton's Jests* (1611), for instance, Tarlton, "to make sport at the least occasion given him" (205) holds up two fingers in the sign of horns and points them at a man in the gallery. This "captious fellow" is incensed because he is "jealous of his wife," and takes "the matter more hainously" because he has been insulted by a player, whom he deems to be beneath him in rank. There is no mention as to whether or not his wife really is cheating on him; the comedy rests solely on Tarlton's ability to trigger his adversary's feelings of insecurity.

Finally, we can best explain certain elements of sexual humour through the incongruity model. As noted, audiences would not have been surprised merely by a licentious presentation of a woman. Joy Wiltenburg notes in her study of early modern street literature that the "requirement of obedience in marriage was not based on women's natural docility [. . .]; rather, it was usually seen as a rule directly contrary to women's inclinations" (98). The real absurdity is that a man, whose role is to dominate his wife and safeguard social order, would allow a woman to indulge in her disorderly passions. Wiltenburg observes this "singular twist on the double standard": "authors treat female sexual transgressions as more serious than male ones, but the undermining of the husband's masculinity is even more shameful than the wife's immorality" (102). It is especially ridiculous when a man jealously attempts to be vigilant in watching over his wife but fails to do so because of his own folly and his spouse's cunning.

The notion of incongruity especially helps to explain the numerous jokes that exaggerate the act of adultery, taking it to extremes in order to elicit a laugh. As noted, the third tale of *The Sack-full of Newes* involves a man who is cuckolded, gets beaten (by a servant, no less), and comes out ludicrously content with both his wife and her lover, ironically *because* of their trickery. There are many other absurd situations in which the husband finds out about his horns but does not become angry or seek revenge, as one would rationally expect. In certain stories, for instance, a man plans to confront his wife's seducer but backs out cowardly at the pivotal moment, thus compounding his loss of masculinity. In others, the husband simply fails to feel any anger at all. In Tale #31 of *Wit and Mirth*, Taylor describes how a man, "being long vexed with the spirit of jelousie," catches another man "somewhat busie with his wife." Incredibly, the husband thanks the rogue, telling him: "thou hast cured me of a strange hellish torment; my suspition is cleared; and apparent knowledge hath given mee such ease of heart, that I will be jealous no more" (25). Such jests play with the audiences' conceptions of proper male behaviour and proper emotional responses to a horrifying scenario. At the same time, these "surprise" endings are effective because of audiences' expectations about cuckold jests themselves: because so many of these gags end with a husband's rage, it is delightfully startling when the cheated man is docile or timid—such figures have lost their masculinity to an extreme, almost unfathomable degree.

In discussing the various ways in which jests register with readers or listeners, I have mainly focused on how early modern men may have reacted to sexual humour. Women must also be considered as part of the jesting audience: although only a small percentage of them were able to read and none are known to have authored jestbooks, they were certainly not kept from hearing and telling jokes. In *The Book of the Courtier*, for instance, signor Gaspar Pallavicino complains that "'Women delight in hearing'" impious and obscene humour: "'For my part, moreover, I have found myself blushing with shame far more often at words uttered by women than by men'" (167).[10] Moreover, certain jestbooks depict women characters participating in jesting, both as tellers and listeners. In *Pasquils Jest and Mother Bunches Merriments* (1604), for example, the narrator claims to have overheard a number of stories from "madde Countrey wenches" as they sit "a milking" (78). He furthermore entreats "all good humord wenches" (79) among his readers to judge the wenches' story of rich widow taking advantage of a naive, young man.

On the one hand, it may seem difficult to imagine actual women enjoying sexual and cuckold jokes that are so misogynistic, depicting wicked females indulging in their "inherent" sexual weaknesses. And yet the element of wit seems to offer many of the wife characters a position of power within the jests and thus makes them possibly appealing to a female audience. In the medieval and early modern periods, women were believed to have an inferior faculty of reason yet to possess great cunning (Blamires 5). As noted, cleverness is a quality more celebrated in the jests than moral virtue. Certainly, the scheming wives are wanton, even dangerous, but they are able to "take care of themselves" (28), as Wardroper describes, and successfully use their sly wit and mirth to manoeuvre through a world dominated by men. Judith Curlee argues that "early modern jokes often represent married women as inept speakers or defective people, who closely resemble, but fundamentally differ from, the people who make or get the joke" (37). Curlee is certainly correct that many wife characters in other types of jests become the butts of laughter (as we shall see), yet the promiscuous wives in cuckold stories seem to stand apart. Those who successfully cheat on their husbands may be immoral, but they are hardly inept speakers or defective in wit. Rather, they are able to deftly lie and scheme in order to fulfil their desires, allowing them to "make" the joke at their spouses' expense.

This is not to argue that female listeners or readers would have necessarily condoned infidelity as a means of displaying equal or greater wit than men. A significant number of jests play on the fact that being labelled a strumpet was as offensive to respectable married women as being deemed a cuckold was to married men. In Tale #20 of *Howleglas*, for instance, the trickster exploits women's sense of honour (or at least the public appearance of such honour) in order to earn money. After constructing a fake relic out of a human skull, Howleglas dresses himself as a pardoner and goes before a parish to seek offerings. He tells the congregation that his skull is powerful but warns that only trustworthy, chaste wives should give: "All those that made their husbands cuckold should sit still and come not to offer." Facing the judgement of their neighbours and peers in so public a place, all the women hurry to hand over their money: "And there was not one woman but she offered because that he had said so [. . .]. And some of them offered twice or thrice because they would be seen. And they that were guilty pressed first" (184). In a similar vein, one of Scogin's stories involves him evading an angry mob of gentlewomen by inviting "the strongest whore" of the group to strike the first blow. The women each claim to be "honest" of their bodies, and "so there fell a contention among them" (Tale #50, 122), allowing Scogin to go free. Thus, female audiences did not identify with the cheating wives of the jests simply on the basis of a shared gender. Women could have still appreciated the superior wit afforded to many of the promiscuous wife characters and at the same time disapproved of their wicked deeds. They "are invited to enjoy the idea of female power but to distance themselves from any open rebellion" (Wiltenburg 101).

In examining sexual jests, some consideration should be given to the early moderns' notion of tasteful humour. Confident in the superiority of his Victorian manners, Hazlitt apologizes for the racy contents of his *Old English Jest-Books*, explaining that in the Elizabethan era "neither the employment of indelicate expressions, nor the performance of indelicate acts, was thought to be inconsistent, even in the highest circles, with morality and virtue"; it was not "till a comparatively recent period that any marked improvement took place" (Vol 2, ix).[11] Certainly most of the collections do contain tales of sexual promiscuity, peppered with lewd slang terms, but it is not fair to denounce them as entirely tasteless or indelicate on the basis of Victorian or modern standards. Rather, we must try to analyze them from the perspective of what their contemporaries considered to be seemly and decorous. By looking at what is *not* contained within the jestbooks, we can perhaps gain insight into what was considered too lurid for their audiences.

As noted, Poggio's facetiae were a major influence on later jestbooks, but English writers did not copy his sexual explicitness. In one story, for instance, Poggio describes an ignorant peasant sleeping behind his wife, with "her buttocks" resting in his lap. Accidentally, he lands "his weapon" in the "goal," and afterwards believes that his wife has two "openings" (31) (two vaginas), one in the front and one in the back. Because he needs only one for himself, as an act of charity he donates the other to the local priest (who is already secretly sleeping with the woman). In another tale, a young woman "not too richly endowed with wisdom" is about to give birth. When the midwife looks below to see the emerging baby, the woman tells her to also "look behind for the child, inasmuch as her husband had on occasion also used the back road" (115). English joke collections only rarely discuss sexual positions so frankly. Intercourse is described in most cases with much more suggestive terms, such as "having one's pleasure," "speeding one's business," or "fulfilling one's will." The point of most of these jests, after all, is not the actual coitus, but rather the humorous events leading up to it and its consequences. Cuckolding jests, for instance, are primarily concerned with the cheated husband behaving foolishly or being deceived; any sex that takes place is important only so far as it allows the husband to become laughable as the butt. It is difficult to say with certainty what Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences considered offensive—sexually descriptive jests may have been enjoyed aloud but considered improper for printing, and individuals' personal tastes would have varied wildly. Yet the general trend in the jestbooks to present sex more obliquely suggests that the majority of audiences and jestbook writers did not view explicit bawdry as acceptably humorous in the same way as Poggio.

Tale #17 of *Pasquils Jests and Mother Bunches Merriments* depicts a "notable crafty companion" (31) who promises to find a wife for a rich but naive man, described as a "young greene Goose." In reality, this rogue offers the man "a fine boy, drest woman-like" (32); the man is deceived and lavishes his "counterfeit young mistris" (33) with money and gifts.[12] This ruse is comical but rare: out of seventeen English jestbooks, this is the only joke playing with the notion of male-male love, and only a handful of others involve sodomy between a man and a woman. In the vast majority of bawdy jests, the sex portrayed is heterosexual in nature, which is somewhat surprising given the numerous literary references to same-sex desire found in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Several early modern comedies, for instance, make light of the fact that boy actors portrayed female roles on stage. Lisa Jardine explains that "The ordinary play-goer does not keep constantly in his or her mind the cross-dressing implications of 'boys in women's parts', but it is nevertheless available to the dramatists as a reference point for dramatic irony, or more serious *double entendre*" (12). *As You Like It* contains one of the most pronounced incidences of this same-sex dramatic irony: Rosalind, played by a boy actor, passes herself off as a boy, Ganymede (a name which, taken from Zeus' catamite, itself has homoerotic suggestions). In this disguise, she then convinces Orlando to pretend she is a girl and thus practice his wooing of a female with a partner whom he believes to be male.

There may be some interrelated reasons for the uniform type of sex and sexual desire expressed in jests. On the one hand, overt homosexual humour may have been deemed too obscene for English tastes. Explicit sodomy, after all, was condemned as a monstrous crime against God and state. Yet there seemed to have been no such dread and fear surrounding other, more subtle types of homoeroticism in the early modern period. Orgel argues, for example, that close male love and friendship was accepted as "a fact of life and an essential element of the patronage system" (36). Marital infidelity, on the other hand, was considered clearly and undisputedly a serious social crime, worthy of ridicule. We can speculate that joke writers would have had little trouble finding inspiration from the numerous and easily identifiable cases of adultery, premarital sex, and male jealousy around them in all levels of society. There may have been far fewer occurrences of homoerotic behaviour deemed flagrantly scornful (and thus the stuff of jesting). Indeed, the rogue's *coup de grace* in the above joke is to convince the young fool that he has slept with a Moor woman, not that he had been innocently courting a boy—we can only wonder how far this man's arousal would have carried him if he had been left alone with the "woman-like" boy in bed and whether this would have been considered absurdly laughable.

Furthermore, cross-dressing humour on the stage is successful because it allows a deeper level of comedic complexity: as noted, it calls an audience's attention to the necessary conventions of early modern theatre, allowing viewers to feel "in" on the self-reflexive irony. In the much simpler and shorter jests, on the other hand, homoerotic references allow no such complexity or additional amusement. Thus, it may have been unnecessary for jest writers to create such multi-layered intrigues that only would have detracted from a joke's quick punch. Jests are verbal, not visual, requiring swift rhetoric as opposed to elaborate histrionic display.

II. Women as scolds and shrews

Humour relating to what has been perceived as women's negative characteristics has been ubiquitous in many different cultures stretching back to the classical period. Not surprisingly, it provides the basis for a significant portion of Elizabethan and Jacobean jests. As with cuckold gags, the number of variations of this type of joke indicates how popular it was: female faults and their detrimental effects on men was a theme deemed worthy of being explored and played with from a number of different angles. As noted, sexual misconduct was often depicted as only one of many kinds of disobedience that a woman could display. John Heywood's Tyb (whom I will discuss in the next chapter) is an excellent, comical example of a nagging wife who also cheats on her husband. Witches represent another, more extreme case of women with both a shrewish nature and carnal lust. The witch was viewed as a depraved abomination rather than lightly humorous because she threatened to upset permanently the roots of patriarchy and social tranquility. Using satanic powers, as Sigrid Brauner explains, she "seduces men with her wanton sexuality, bewitching them and rendering them impotent; and she dominates men through willful displays of arrogant self-assertion" (40).

Many jests, however, focus on women's disagreeable personalities but do not expressly discuss sex. Certain gags paint women as evil in general, without specifying the manner of their wickedness. Jest #69 of *Conceits, Clinches, Flashes and Whimzies*, for example, links all females to Eve, whose natural inferiority left her vulnerable to seduction and sin: "One asked the reason why women were so crooked and perverse in their conditions. Another answered: because the first woman was made of a crooked thing" (21). Most jokes, though, focus on a particular weakness, such as stupidity, cruelty, or vanity. By far the largest complaint is against women's loose tongues; females are stereotypically portrayed as overbearing shrews, particularly in their status as wives, who henpeck and verbally torment their mates. Occasionally a husband's behaviour, such as excessive drunkenness, is the cause for such hostility. More often, it is assumed that wives are shrewish because of their innate mental defects and emotional imbalance. According to traditional belief, "Lack of intelligence prevents women not only from distinguishing good from evil, but from remembering the rules of behaviour. Amoral and undisciplined, women are governed primarily by passion" (Brauner 36).

Similar to many of the promiscuous women in the cuckold jests, a large number of scolding wives are able to best their husbands: they use their tongues as much for quick retorts and clever answers as for faultfinding. Tale #104 of Taylor's *Wit and Mirth* provides an example of this situation: "A fellow being scoulded at by his Wife" threatens to drown himself in a river if she will not treat him with more respect and kindness. As they approach the water, she sarcastically counsels him to leap not in a shallow place, "for it will grieue [her] heart to see how long [he] will bee a dying," but instead to choose a deep spot, "where [he] shall be dispatched presently" (70). Other times the woman succeeds not so much because of her wit, but because she has completely mastered her husband through verbal, even physical, abuse. In Jest #12 of the *Merry Tales Made by Master Skelton* (1567), a cowardly cobbler refuses to fight in the king's wars but claims that his fierce wife should go in his place: "For she can fight and play the devil with her distaff, and with stool, staff, cup, or candlestick. For, by may fay, Ich am sick, I chill go home to bed. I think I shall die" (339).

Nevertheless, there are far fewer nagging women who end up as winners in comparison to cheating women; many jokes instead present both partners as equally laughable or make the belligerent woman the target of laughter. Tale #62 of *A Hundred Merry Tales* presents a man who marries a rich, beautiful, but unfortunately mute woman. The man, saddened by his lover's infirmity, one day meets a fellow who offers a remedy to restore her speech. The plan works, but the husband is upset when he finally hears his wife's first words, which are a grumbling complaint: "'I beshrew your heart for waking me so early!'" As time goes on, he becomes "more vexed" by her increasingly "shrewd words." When he again meets the fellow, he asks for "a medicine to modify her that she speaks not so much" (120). The other man then reveals himself as a devil, but he claims that not even his dark magic is able to subdue or silence a woman: "'I nor all the devils in hell that have the most power be not able to make a woman to be still, nor to cause her to leave her speaking'" (121). An audience can laugh at the luckless husband, but the heart of the humour is this stereotypical scold and her very vocal antagonism. The fact that even divine powers, let alone mortal men, are so ineffective in containing a woman's irrational anger makes the situation even more ludicrous and thus amusing. (As we shall see later, John Heywood uses this same absurd idea, Hell's inability to curb a woman's fierce tongue, in *The Foure PP*.)

In other jests, the husband is much more active in securing a victory over his spouse. In some stories, the man bests his wife's cursing with a witty reply that is the climax of the gag. One of *Tarlton's Jests*, for instance, presents Tarlton sailing from Southampton to London with his wife, with whom he often quarrels. When a great storm threatens to overturn the boat, the captain orders that everyone throw overboard "the heaviest thing hee could best spare, to the end to lighten some-what the ship." Tarlton offers to throw his wife off the side, with a droll explanation: "she is the heaviest thing I have, and I can best spare her" (Tale #56, 234). In other gags, the husband complements his wit with very real violence, not just a humorous threat. A particularly nasty joke in Taylor's *Wit and Mirth* features a "poore labouring man" who is serverely "battersang'd and belabour'd with tongue mettles" from his spouse. One day this woman fakes her death to observe her husband's reaction and see if he still loves her. When he enters his house and discovers his wife lying prone on the floor, he begins "bemoning the happy losse of his most kind vexation" (Tale #88, 54). "To make sure" (55), however, he snaps her neck.

As with sexual jests, we can use the three theories of humour to assess the ways in which woman/wife jokes function. On one level, jokes about women being evil or shrewish allow men to express their feelings of "*Sudden Glory*" (Hobbes 45) over the "weaker" sex. The women characters who scold and dominate their husbands seem to do so out of an ingrained habit, what Bergson would define as a "*callousness to social life*" (147). Mocking such women, then, can be seen as a necessary way of curbing such socially undesirable behaviour. The superiority model also addresses why there are more women who are the butts and more men who are winners in this type of jest. I have already argued that a cheating wife was seen as a disruptive threat to a husband's masculinity and thus to the patriarchal society at large. Having an uncaring, nagging wife was viewed certainly as undesirable, yet less damaging and cause for less anxiety than a promiscuous whore. If women were deemed (at least by men) to be universally antagonistic, especially after they married, then husbands were understandably left with limited options to control such weaknesses. A man could retain his masculinity and at the same time allow his wife to indulge in a certain degree of "natural" belligerence—many jests poke fun at the man who irrationally hopes to keep his wife from *any* scolding at all. Moreover, while a husband character can easily answer his wife's hostility with a clever insult, it is impossible for a cuckold to redeem his and his wife's honour, especially not through a simple display of wit. It appears that a man is threatened by a disagreeable wife and thus becomes laughable when he permits too much hostility, allowing her to outwit him or steal his masculinity through excessive mistreatment.

The incongruity presented by an unruly wife can also explain the humour of these jests. First, the fact that women were widely believed to be aggressive browbeaters contradicts (and explains why there existed) the general desire that women of the period should be docile, obedient, and silent. Yet because such misogynist views were so common, a nagging wife character alone does not offer much in the way of absurdity, just as a wife with wanton lusts is not surprising. Thus, many jokes depend on other ludicrous characters and situations involving a shrew in order to be funny. As noted, in certain tales a husband becomes laughable when his desire that a wife be completely obedient fails; such men's conception of their power over women thus conflicts with the actual independence that many women possess. Other jokes take the degree of women's antagonism to extreme levels. Tale #13 of *Pasquils Jests* describes how Coomes of Strapforth hears that his wife is drowned and looks in the river for her body. His friends tell him he is searching in the wrong place because he is looking against the current: "Nay, zounds (quoth hee), I shall neuer find her that way: for shee did all things so contrary in her life time, that now she is dead, I am sure she will goe against the streame" (27). Regardless of whether Coomes is speaking foolishly or ironically, the notion of a woman able to behave so irrationally and with such hostility, even after death, is farfetched and amusingly unexpected.

Finally, the relief theory applies because woman/wife jokes may have helped to relieve tension, especially in males, over the perceived failure of women to conform to patriarchal expectations of obedience. Granted, pointing out the fact that so many women behave wilfully towards their husbands may have revealed the instability in such expectations and thus increased anxiety. Yet, as I have argued, a shrewish wife seems to have been less of a threat to masculinity than a promiscuous wife, as long as she was not allowed to master her husband. Telling or listening to a tale of a scold might not have weighed so heavily on the mind of a man married to such a woman, especially if she did not seriously threaten his feelings of superiority. Indeed, such jests may have allowed men to indulge in fanciful thoughts of taking action against a nagging wife that would not have been possible in the real world. Throwing her overboard and snapping her neck are two extreme examples of asserting masculine dominance; indeed, they can be considered humorous (at least by men) because they are so very extreme. Certainly physical abuse against women did actually occur, but not in so mirthful and carefree a manner as in the jests, where there are no legal or social repercussions. Jesting represents a forum that allowed early modern men to voice their marital complaints openly and to fantasize about aggressively punishing hostile women without consequence.

The question remains: did early modern women find humour in these jests that scorned their sex? As with the cuckold jests, female audiences may have been amused by anecdotes in which women display greater wit than their husbands, even if they were portrayed as stereotypical shrews. But what of the numerous jests in which females are the butts? Again, it is important to consider that jest audiences would have comprised both men and women, and thus jest writers needed to appeal more or less to both sexes. Orgel's comments on the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre seem applicable to jests:

> The fact of the large female audience must have had important consequences for the development of English popular drama. It meant that the success of any play was significantly dependent on the receptiveness of women; and this in turn means that theatrical representation—whether of women or men or anything else—also depended on their success to a significant degree on the receptiveness of women. (10-11)

He argues that misogynistic portrayals of females are not strictly male conceptions, but instead they "represent *cultural* fantasies, and women are implicated in them as well as men" (11). Thus, many women of the period also believed that they needed to submit to the male "heads" of family, church, and state. Yet such a view does not entail that all women would have necessarily viewed their gender as inherently and universally wicked, or that every wife became a shrew simply because of her sex. A significant number of early modern women writers, such as Anne Askew, Aemilia Lanyer, Rachel Speght, and Susanna Parr to name only a few, defended feminine virtue and challenged traditional assumptions about female sinfulness.

Perhaps female audiences, then, would not have enjoyed jests that attacked women on the mere basis of their gender, depicting them as innately, unavoidably perverse. It seems more likely, however, that they took pleasure in jests that mock more specific women characters as scolds because they could distinguish themselves from and feel superior to such people. In the above story from Taylor's *Wit and Mirth* involving the labourer who kills his wife "to make sure," the woman decides to test her husband's love only at the behest of "foure or fiue women" neighbours. They pity the man, and they come "to admonish and counsell his wife to a quiet behauior towards her husband; telling her that she was a shame to all good women, in her bad vsage of so honest a painefull man" (54). Just as many women were ashamed at being thought a whore, many women were insulted at being deemed a shrew. Thus, they could have laughed at jests that play on such anxieties, especially when *other* women are revealed to be so disagreeable and wicked.

III. Arses, Farts, and Turds

Scatological jests involve the lower body parts and their natural functions. Normally deemed to be obscene and coarse, these include the buttocks, genitalia, flatulence, defecation, and occasionally urination. Most often, the gag depends on the feelings of anxiety and shame triggered by the lower orifices. Like many of the other jests analyzed thus far, these stem from a long tradition of excremental humour in popular culture and literature, stretching back to classical and medieval times. Perhaps the most famous example (and definitely one of the funniest) is found in Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale," which was likely based on a French fabliau (Cooper 96). This racy narrative gleefully combines cuckoldry with scatology, particularly when Absolon, hoping to seduce a married woman, inadvertently kisses her "naked ers,/Ful savourly" (626-627). Later, when he seeks revenge against Alison, he bears the brunt of Nicholas's fart, "As greet as it had been a thonder-dent" (704). As Jae Num Lee explains, English jestbooks employ farts, shit, and arses "primarily for the purpose of producing laughter prompted by obscenity" (23); derision is often a part of these jokes, but not in every case. Lee further classifies scatological jests under three broad groupings, a helpful division that I will also use in this study. These are the prankish, the flatulent, and the stercoraceous (24).

Prankish jokes, which make up the majority, involve the use of the lower body as part of a trick intended to embarrass and anger another person. The heroes of the jest-biographies are notorious for such schemes. They regularly fart or shit on others, invite people to kiss their arses, and even dupe people into eating their waste, all the while evading punishment through their cunning. As Douglas explains, the joker figure "appears to be a privileged person who can say certain things"—or do certain things, such as fart and shit—"in a certain way which confers immunity" (107). Howleglas is particularly fond of using such tactics on a wide variety of victims, including a child, a doctor, Jewish merchants, a priest, a rival clown, a hostess, and many more. Tale #27 describes him offering to sell a load of fat to a shoemaker at a cheap price. Instead of the promised goods, he delivers twelve barrels filled with frozen animal dung, along with six barrels of real fat to serve as "the example of his merchandise." The shoemaker, falling for the ruse, pays him for the barrels. After Howleglas departs, the dupe orders his servants to heat them in order to melt the tarrow, with comical results:

> And when the dirt began to wax hot it began to smell.
>
> Then said one to the other: 'I ween some of us hath beshitten their breeches.' And then came the master and bad them make clean their shoes—'For one of you hath trodden in a turd.' And then they looked about, but they found nothing.
>
> And then should they have put one of the barrels in the cauldron, then saw they well that it was the barrel that stank, for it was full of turds. And

> then they left their work and went for to seek Howleglas, but he was gone. (200-201)

The shoemaker, then, suffers from much more than being cheated out of money in this story. The comedic summit is reached when he and his servants also endure the foul stench and believe that they are responsible. Then the shameful realization that Howleglas is behind it all—the shoemaker would have been better off if he paid for empty barrels! In this and similar prankish jests, one's bodily functions (or the use of another's waste) takes the place of a verbal retort or insult. At the appropriate time, the anus can be manipulated as an expression of derisive wit on practically anybody—after all, who enjoys touching or smelling a turd, a fart, or an arse?

Flatulent jests, making up the second group, depict people blowing wind or exposing their lower body in public by accident, rather than part of a calculated scheme. The audience is invited to laugh at the guilty person's response, which is normally embarrassment but occasionally pride and pleasure. In Tale #36 of *Tales and Quicke Answers*, the flatulent person is not even aware of her body's actions: this story describes a merchant who brags to his lord that he has never heard his wife fart (implying that she does not engage in such demeaning behaviour). They make a wager for a "souper" (49) over whether he will hear her do so within three months. As part of his secret plan to win the bet, the lord borrows fifty crowns from the merchant, and soon after he borrows another fifty crowns. The merchant, worrying that he will not be repaid, is kept up at night: "And as he laye wakyng, he harde his wyfe now and then rappe out fartes." Having lost the bet, he pays his lord and acknowledges his folly: "Forsothe syr if I shulde for euery farte pay a souper, all my goodes and landes wolde nat suffice therto" (50). This silly man, then, assumes the shame for his wife's gas, and will now view her in a whole new light. She is not the perfectly controlled and proper creature that he imagined; as an ordinary person, she is prone to natural, uncontainable outbursts from her body, no matter how distasteful they may be deemed.

Finally, stercoraceous jokes depend little on characters' anxieties and emotions aroused by the lower body; rather, they present faeces and farts as laughable on their own. As Lee explains, "Their main object is to elicit laughter by forcing excremental tales upon us so crudely that we are compelled to conclude that scatology is an end in itself, the main source of laughter" (26). Tale #101 of Taylor's *Wit and Mirth*, for instance, presents a country bumpkin who goes to a physician to have his wife's "water" (67) analyzed. This rude fellow, who freely admits that he does not understand the doctor's "allegant speeches" (68), makes a series of foolish malapropisms throughout their conversation. At the end of the joke, the physician asks him how his wife "goes to stoole," and he responds: "in plaine terms shee goes to stoole very strangely, for in the morning it is so hard that your worship can scarce bite it with your teeth, and at night it is so thin that you might eat it with a spoon" (68). Of course, an audience can chuckle over the fellow's ignorance and over how disgusted and shocked the doctor must be. Yet the heart of the gag seems to rely on the audience's own disgust and shock after hearing such gross humour. The vivid description of the woman's stool, plus the thought of how best to consume such waste, is revoltingly merry—so long as it stays within the joke and does not actually occur. From the sheer number of scatological jokes that have survived, we can presume that the many early moderns enjoyed them. Yet Taylor's heading to Tale #101 suggests that more graphic stercoraceous humour did not appeal to all tastes. Taylor plays mischievously with this fact through a clever pun designed to make his readers dwell further on the prospect of eating shit: "This Tale I writ on purpose to sticke in the teeth of my proud, squeamish, nice, criticall reader" (67).

It is not difficult to see how scatological humour functions under the superiority theory of humour. On the most basic level, farts, turds, and arses have the power to degrade people because of their physical properties: simply put, these bodily things have a vile smell and taste that many cultures find repulsive. Moreover, such jests allow us to laugh scornfully at those who fail to conform to societal expectations of controlling our bodily odours and noises. Here we see an excellent example of Bergson's "mechanical inelasticity" (67). The body represents an absent-minded machine, and society laughs at those without the "wideawake adaptability" (67) to rein in its operations during inappropriate times and in inappropriate places. Society can laugh just as hard at those who *are* "wideawake" to what is considered proper behaviour in public, but who have bodies that behave out of their control, much to their shame. In the case of jestbook tricksters, we laugh *alongside* those who have fully embraced and indeed celebrate their natural purgations, and who are able to realize precisely when their gas and waste can be exploited for pranks. Rarely do these clowns soil themselves accidentally; rather, they have an amazing level of bodily control and can shit and fart seemingly at will. While characters such as Scogin and Howleglas do not act out the sensational excremental feats described in Rabelais' *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua*, they are nevertheless products of grotesque realism. Their anal dexterity represents, to borrow Bahktin's terms, an "exaggeration of the inappropriate to incredible and monstrous dimensions" (306), and they always decide when and where to defecate in order to degrade their victims.

Scatology allows us to laugh at those who do not adhere to proper public etiquette, but at the same time it tears down constructed notions of hierarchy and decorum in a combination of both the superiority and relief theories. As Douglas explains, those jokes "which bring forward the physiological exigencies to which moral beings are subject, are using one universal, never-failing technique of subversion" (95). All people, no matter what class, education, or level of refinement, fart, shit, piss, and have an arse. Just as the intellect often fails to contain people's sexual urges, the mind's wishes also conflict with the actions of the corpus. Scatology humour "puncture[s] pomposity" (Thomas 9) by revealing and exploiting this fact: these jests involve people from all classes, both high and low, allowing their bodies or others' bodies to embarrass them.

Indeed, the jest is funnier when it is a high-ranking person who is disgraced. As Bergson notes, vanity, which is "an admiration of ourselves based on the admiration we think we are inspiring in others," is the very root of the comic character; laughter works to bring "back to complete self-consciousness" (172) the folly of excessive self-admiration. Thus, an upper-class person with an inflated sense of his own importance and dignity is easy to ridicule through excrement. We can laugh at such a fool when he is confronted with the realization that his rank does not save him from the foul stench of faeces or that he shares the same flatulent, corporeal nature as other people. This also explains why women were such popular "butts" in scatological humour: if the early moderns desired females to be modest, well-mannered, and silent, then a woman farting or accidentally appearing naked in public exposes the gap between this fantasy and reality. The ridicule associated with bodily humour, then, represents both conservative and mildly subversive forces. It scorns those who deviate from expectations of proper behaviour and bodily control, especially when in public. At the same time, it reveals that these expectations, especially for the upper classes and women, are frequently unrealistic.

Scatological humour can also function as a release of tension and anxiety built up around such "improper" functions. If society scorns publicly shitting, farting, and showing one's lower body parts, then joking about doing so is a means of coping with and alleviating feelings of disgust and disgrace. This release seems especially true for stercoraceous jests: they are explicitly graphic as a means of laughing at the foulness of farts, turds, and arses and, more importantly, laughing at the revulsion that such natural processes frequently arouse in people. The stercoraceous joke, again using Bakhtin's terms, "gaily and simultaneously materializes and unburdens. It liberates objects from the snares of false seriousness, from illusions and sublimations inspired by fear" (376). This explicit humour celebrates its grossness, forcing audiences to acknowledge and laugh at the loathsome smells and sounds that they themselves make. It forces people to confront their disgust over the lower body and that this "false seriousness" can be easily exploited for laughs.

The notion of incongruity provides the basis for these superiority and relief explanations of excremental humour: as noted, we laugh at people who cannot control their lower bodies and we laugh with tricksters who irreverently exploit their anal functions because they both behave publicly in ways that we do not expect. Incongruity is also central to a special class of scatological jokes that involve a reversal of the wit and the fool. Tale #23 of *A Hundred Merry Tales*, for instance, depicts a maid washing clothes in a river, "And as she stooped, oft times her smock cleaved between her buttocks." A passing friar sees the woman so indecently revealing herself, and seizes the opportunity for "sport." He gleefully advises her, "'Maid, maid take heed—for Bayard bites at her bridle!'" The maid, however, has a wittier comeback: "Nay, wis, master friar [. . .] he doth but wipe his mouth and weeneth ye will come and kiss him" (87). When hearing the joke's opening, an audience may expect that the young maid will end up as the victim of derisive laughter for revealing her arse in public, which is especially improper because she is a woman. Yet she exhibits no outward shame when learning of her exposure. Rather, she exploits the situation to her advantage and reverses the insult back onto her adversary, which comes as an amusing surprise for the audience and as a disagreeable jolt for the friar. Here is yet another example of a female character possessing a sly wit and tongue that can render any male foolish; as the jest's moral tag advises men, "a woman's answer is never to seek" (87). This story is typical of other reversal jokes, which often depict a character attempting to shame another (normally a woman or someone of a lower class) for public displays of nudity, farting, or shitting. Playing with the audience's anticipation of how the jest will end, figures such as this maid are always able to use their indecency in order to reassert themselves against their attackers.

The jests and jestbooks of early modern England were not created out of a vacuum: writers drew on a much larger comedic tradition, changing the language and details of time-honoured stories to best suit their audience. Although based on much older models, sexual, misogynistic, and scatological jokes continued to be fresh, racy, and entertaining for both the elite and the masses until well into the seventeenth century. The popularity of these gags stemmed from their close relation to the culture's ideologies and anxieties, held by both men and women from all social classes. These comical tales allowed people to laugh derisively at (and thus curb the undesirable behaviour of) characters who fail to conform to important social codes. These include husbands who allow their wives to steal their masculinity, women who exhibit irrational and wicked behaviour, and those who cannot control their lower bodies in public. These jokes also respond to early modern men and women's notions of incongruity. Thus, people who flaunt expectations of proper behaviour are laughable first because they represent a reality that absurdly contradicts social concepts. It is possible to laugh mockingly at such inflexible figures because they are ludicrous. Finally, these jokes grant a momentary release of the tensions raised by these social rules of decorum, allowing people to indulge in discussions of sex, marital tensions, and the lower body, as well as fantasize about the reversal of class and gender hierarchies. Certain jokes, such as those involving cuckolds, are able to trigger and aggravate anxieties by revealing that cultural codes of conduct are precarious and can be easily upset by those who are foolish, willful, or mischievous.

Chapter 2: Jesting in the Interludes of John Heywood

"Art thou Heywood that hath made many mad plays?"
"Yea, many plays; few good works in all my days."
"Art thou Heywood that hath made men merry long?"
"Yea, and will, if I be made merry among."
—from "Of Heywood"

The same tradition of bawdy and scatological humour that shaped the English jestbooks also found its way into English drama. The Tudor interludes of John Heywood (c.1497-1578) are some of the earliest experiments with farce and jesting humour in English secular comedy, representing a notable break from earlier medieval plays. Heywood depicts many of the same stock characters and situations depicted in the jokes of his time: henpecked husbands, domineering wives, immoral clergymen, lascivious women, merry tricksters, sexual infidelities, and battles of wit. In some plays, humour is used only occasionally to lighten more serious intellectual debate; in others, it is the primary focus, with little attempt at moral instruction. Heywood activates jests onstage, complicating and enlivening them in fascinating ways. He makes steps towards developing more realistic, complex characters out of comparatively simple types, and he enables his audiences to experience visually, and even interactively partake in, jest humour. Moreover, his plays frequently involve the act of jesting itself, allowing playgoers to observe characters sharing humorous stories among themselves, their motivations for doing so, and their amusing reactions to such gags.

Life and Influences

Heywood was a renowned wit and an accomplished entertainer. He was born around 1497, but little is known about his parents or upbringing. One of the earliest mentions of him was in 1519, when his name appeared in court records as a singer. Over the next 45 years, Heywood contributed at court as a dancer, musician, playwright, actor, and poet, earning for himself both wealth and esteem (Axton and Happe 4). The publication of his extant plays began early in 1533 with *Johan Johan* and continued into the next year.[1]

Although a devout Catholic, Heywood successfully rode out the religious turmoil and persecution that came with Henry VIII's Reformation in the 1530s. In 1542-43, however, he was arrested for his involvement in a Catholic conspiracy against Archbishop Cranmer. He was spared from execution after a public recantation, and all his lands and grants were eventually returned to him. Whereas many other clowns and jesters have found themselves in trouble through their wit, Heywood's might have played a role in saving his life in this case. Sir John Harington, an Elizabethan writer, commented many years later on his trial and release: "What thinke you by Haywood, that scaped hanging with his mirth? the King being graciously and (as I thinke) truely perswaded that a man that wrate so pleasant and harmlesse verses, could not have any harmfull conceit against his proceedings" (102).

In 1546 Heywood printed *A Dialogue of Proverbs*, which the title page advertises as "*all the proverbs in the englishe tongue, compacte in a matter concerning two manner of marriages*" (Farmer 1). It was reprinted in 1549, 1556, and 1561, and established Heywood among his peers as a master writer and collector of proverbs, a very highly regarded genre in the sixteenth century (Johnson 136). During the brief reign of Edward (1547-1553), it seems that Heywood's position at court was not damaged because of the young king's ardent Protestantism. Nevertheless, Heywood must have been overjoyed when Mary, his former music pupil and a zealous Catholic, took the throne. In 1556 he published his lengthy allegorical poem, *The Spider and the Fly*, which he considered to be his greatest literary achievement. The ending glorifies Mary as the symbolic housemaid who is able to quell the fighting between the flies (Catholics) and the spiders (Protestants) by sweeping away the cobwebs with a broom (Johnson 30).

In 1558 the Protestant Elizabeth became queen, and for a few years Heywood's social standing remained unchanged; he continued to be involved in court entertainments, and in 1562 *John Heywoodes Woorkes* was published (Axton and Happe 9). Besides *A Dialogue of Proverbs* and other miscellaneous poems, *Woorkes* included the four hundred humorous and highly popular epigrams he had published since 1550, along with two hundred new ones. Many of these epigrams resemble jests in verse, and deal with such familiar topics as farts, witty women, disagreeable wives, henpecked husbands, and cuckolds. "Of Blowing" is a typical example: "What wind can there blow that doth not some man please? A fart in the blowing doth the blower ease" (144). As Elizabeth's reign continued, however, Heywood and other Catholics felt increasingly persecuted for their views. Soon after the Articles of Religion were introduced in 1563, Heywood fled to France at the age of 67. Although the queen granted him permission to return, he remained in exile abroad, enduring poverty, misery, and religious violence. He died in Louvrain in 1578, reportedly preserving his famed mirth until the very end (Johnson 35).

In looking at Heywood's influences, it is important to discuss his family connections and position within the More circle. As a young man, he befriended Sir Thomas More, a well-known wit and one of the major literary and intellectual figures of the age. Heywood may have been part of More's entourage who accompanied him to the court of Henry VIII in 1519 (Johnson 17). Under More's guidance (at least before his execution in 1535), Heywood and other followers sought to analyze and react to the world around them rationally, based on the teachings of classical and early Church writers. As Christian humanists, they shared progressive theories about law, social hierarchy, government, human dignity, and the necessity of religious and educational reforms (Hogrefe 1-2). Heywood's plays, especially the three debates, incorporate such ideas by frequently satirizing legal, social, and religious abuses.

In 1522 Heywood became more firmly entrenched within the More circle by marrying Joan Rastell, whose father, John, was the husband of More's sister.[2] Besides sharing his famous brother-in-law's Catholic views (until his own conversion to Protestantism in the early 1530s) John Rastell was also a prominent playwright and printer, the first to publish play texts.[3] It is likely that he had a hand in turning Heywood towards drama: he had a great deal of experience producing court pageants, and he built his own private stage in his house at Finsbury Fields. His son-in-law, then, would have been exposed early on to the art of stagecraft at this "family theatre," where Rastell and his friends (including More) regularly performed (Axton and Happe 4). It is also significant that Rastell was the printer of *A Hundred Merry Tales* in 1526, which Derek Brewer describes as having a "probable oral base" but intended for "a specifically literate circle, the Humanists associated with Sir Thomas More" (99).[4] Heywood would have been acquainted with these *Tales*, as well as with similar stories shared orally. As an aficionado of wit, he doubtlessly read other jestbooks that were brought over from the Continent and shared among the educated elite.

The debate format that shaped many of Heywood's interludes had a long history in the medieval period and continued to be popular among Tudor writers. At the same time, his plays were also innovative from an English standpoint because they were the first to import specific comedic devices from overseas. As Robert Johnson describes, "[Heywood] is in the native tradition, but he combines the tradition with French farce and thus simultaneously separates himself from the developing indigenous drama" (108). The early secular theatre of France had produced dramatic forms, topics, and characters not found in England until much later. The French farces, for instance, flourished in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries at a time when the English stage was largely preoccupied with serious allegory and Biblical events (Johnson 115). Humour was certainly not absent in the moralities and mystery cycles, but it was not given the same prominence as in the farces. These were brief, raucous plays in verse that dealt with ordinary people engaged in some trivial, everyday conflict: a practical joke, a deception, a scuffle, an insult, and so forth (Maxwell 17). Sex and marriage, and the laughable emotions aroused by them, were frequent topics. Similar to the early jestbook writers, the farce writers took their material from the fabliaux, the novelle, oral tales, and extensively from each other (Maxwell 26). By working at Henry VIII's court, which was heavily influenced by French language and culture, Heywood would have encountered an ample supply of farces to inspire his own comedy (Mullini 30).

The Plays

The early Tudor interludes were brief productions put on in the private houses of the elite or at court, intended as entertainment during the courses of a feast or in between the acts of a longer play. Often simple, one-act dialogues, few display the dramatic quality of the later Elizabethan plays (Abram 118). Heywood's interludes range in length, but none would have taken longer than an hour and a half to perform, most likely by literate, amateur actors taken from court. *Wether* is unique in that it calls for ten parts, more than in the other five plays, which suggests that a boy's company may have played some of the roles (Johnson 107). The settings of Heywood's interludes are all fairly plain, using props, scenery, and costumes that were easily brought to or already found in a lord's banquet hall. Not all Tudor entertainments were so simple, however; many other court productions involved lavish, intricate sets and machinery (Axton and Happe 27).

Many modern scholars agree that Heywood's first interlude was *Witty and Witless*, a relatively amateurish debate written around 1519.[5] The order in which the remaining plays were written is not known, although 1528 is generally suggested as a final date for composition (Johnson 101). The sequence in which I analyze the plays in this chapter is not intended to indicate a concrete chronological succession. Rather, I group them in two broad categories, debate and farce, and study them based on what appears to be their comedic development: humour is used primarily in the debates as a diversion from weighty intellectual and moral lessons. It seems, however, that Heywood increasingly devoted his writing to entertainment, physical action and gags instead of didacticism and philosophical analysis.

Witty and Witless

This interlude, as the title suggests, questions whether it is better to be witty (that is, to possess intelligence) or witless (to be a fool). Johnson observes that this is one of the earliest attempts to dramatize the debate genre (34), but it contains very little of what the modern reader would recognize as "dramatic": the three characters engage in a number of protracted, scholarly speeches, with very little action or humour. Erasmus, the great humanist scholar and a friend of More, seems to have influenced Heywood in writing *Witty and Witless*. In works such as *Encomium Moriae* and *Praise of Folly,* Erasmus similarly explores the relationship of the wise man and the fool and the importance wit has on whether or not a person goes to heaven (Axton and Happe 34). The theme of wisdom was also a favourite among scholars and writers since the Middle Ages. Many medieval tales, for instance, featured Marcolphus, a commoner figure who uses cleverness and common sense to outwit the wise King Solomon (Zall, A Hundred Merry Tales 4).[6] Indeed, the fact that the characters in *Witty and Witless* often refer to "sage Salomon" as the prime example of a learned man suggests that Heywood was familiar with these fables (Axton and Happe 33).

The interlude begins with James and John already in mid-argument over whether it is "Better to be a foole then a wyse man" (Wy3). James, who believes this to be the case, dominates the debate. First, he points out that those with wit and those without both suffer equally from physical pains and material desires. Next, he maintains that the witty alone are forced to endure mental anguish and restless imaginations; this "payne of mynde," he claims, "Ys more paynfull then payne of body " (Wy205-206). Finally, he argues that fools, who have no understanding of good or evil, are "sewer of salvashyon" (Wy375). The witty, who are not so innocent, face the danger of going to Hell for their conscience decisions to sin. Although he initially objects, John proves to be a rather poor debater and soon concedes to James' argument: "The pythe of yowr conclewsyons be all so pewre / That better be a foole then a wyse man, sewre" (Wy407-408).

The second part of the play begins with James summarizing his main points directly to the audience. Jerome then arrives to point out James' many errors; he enters the stage apparently from among the viewers, which implicitly represents that they are a third party within this debate and should also be able to critique James' position. Jerome skilfully argues that wit, which is "indyferent to good or yll wurkyng" (Wy418), should not be mistaken for wisdom, which "governth wytt alwey vertue to use. / And all kynds of vyce alway to refewse" (Wy423-424). A person cannot have wisdom without wit, but being witty does not entail that one is also wise. James represents the latter: insulted by Jerome's corrections, he rashly leaves the stage without listening to reason.

In the final part, Jerome attempts to undo his adversary's negative influence on John. He asks, for instance, whether it is more desirable to "be a reasonable man / Or an unresonabyll beast" (Wy450-451). When John answers assuredly that he would rather be a man, with "imagynashyon" and "resonabyll consyderatyon" (Wy487-488), Jerome points out that there is "small dyffrens" (Wy517) between beasts and the witless. He then argues that, while innocent fools may be sure of salvation, the Bible teaches that "There are in hevyn dyvers degrees of glory / To be recyvyd of men acordyngly" (Wy563-565). Thus, the wise man can attain a higher position in Heaven than the fool because he has had to overcome temptation and sin. While a rational man cannot be absolutely guaranteed of salvation, Jerome maintains that it is an easy goal to attain: men need only ask God for grace and mercy, and He will always help them. John cannot help but be won over by such a logical position: "And the more witty am I for yow...I woolde now rather be / Sage Saloman then sot Somer, I assewre ye" (Wy655-660). As much as the characters note Solomon for his famed intelligence, there are numerous references throughout *Witty* to Will Somer, a professional jester who was a favourite of Henry VIII, as the archetypal fool. As a hard-working writer, musician, dancer, and actor, Heywood seems to be using these references to poke fun at his rival's contrasting laziness; Jerome, for instance, points out how Somer earns his living by standing "all day yn slomber" (Wy522). Heywood's audience, no doubt acquainted with the clown and his antics at court, would have certainly enjoyed such topical name-dropping.

Witty contains very little farce or jestbook humour, but the interlude is not completely devoid of comedy. John, for instance, uses wordplay at times, such as when he lists for James the many ways that the witless man suffers at the hands of tormentors:

> Some beate hym, some bob hym
> Some joll hym, some job hym,
> Some tugg hym by the heres,
> Some lugg hym by the eares,
> [.............................]
> Some whysk hym, some whype hym,
> Wythe scharpe naylys some nype hym. (Wy31-42)

While there is nothing explicit indicated in the stage direction, it seems plausible that John would mimic these actions as he speaks, thus adding movement to accent the brisk, bouncing rhythm of his verse. Such clownish dancing, mixed with rapidly rhymed lists, is a regular feature of Heywood's other plays.

The ongoing bickering between John and James offers more frequently funny moments. James, in particular, uses insults and derision to make his case appear stronger. Rather than discuss ideas politely, he often brags how easily and completely he can defeat John's arguments. At one point, he promises "by a fayer fygewre of ynduckshyn / To bring [John's] parte softe and fayer to dystrucksshyn" (Wy195-196). He also invites the audience to laugh directly at his opponent by pointing out to them how often he has forced John to agree with him: "Lyke as a goose can say nothynge but 'hys', / So hathe he now nothynge, nothynge to say but 'yes'" (Wy365-366). When Jerome enters the debate, James similarly scorns him as "some yownge schooleman, a freshe comonor" (Wy431). This character's nastiness allows some much-needed laughter in an otherwise dull play, but it also seems to reflect Heywood's thematic concerns. As a man with wit but no wisdom, James is easily able to bully the foolish John into submission, yet his arrogance does not allow him to see his own errors in judgement. Jerome, on the other hand, does not need to resort to insults; he uses pure logic and Scriptural precedent to make his case. He does not add much in the way of humour to the play, but this is because Heywood does not want any distraction from his arguments. The viewers should closely heed his sober, exact views about wisdom and the true path to salvation.

A Play of Love

This is a scholarly debate in the style of *Witty and Witless* but with more physical action and comedy. The four characters represent each of the four states of love, and each pairs off to argue the degree of their respective pain or pleasure: Lover not loved debates with Loved not lovyng (a woman), and Lover loved debates with No lover nor loved. In essence, this interlude represents an intellectual exploration of the complexity of love and the myriad of secondary feelings it arouses: joy, self-fulfillment, jealousy, scorn, shame, and melancholy. The very names of the characters suggest the interconnected and ongoing nature of this debate.

There is no known source for *A Play of Love*, but the topic was fashionable in England and abroad. In France, for instance, non-dramatic dialogues about love had been in demand since the thirteenth century. One of the most celebrated in the early Tudor period was Martial d'Auvergne's *Les Arrets d'Amour* (Bolwell 88). Such dialogues had a shorter history in England, but Heywood probably encountered a number of popular lyrical debates analyzing a lover's pain and pleasure that were published in the early part of the fifteenth century. These included Wyllyam Walter's *Spectacle of Lovers* (n.d.) and Thomas Feylde's *Contrauersye bytwene a louer and a Jaye* (c.1522) (Axton and Happe 46-47).

A Play of Love begins with Lover not loved describing for the audience "the moste imcomparable payne" (L62) of unrequited devotion. Loved not lovyng soon enters and describes how she is pursued relentlessly by "a certayne man / Whom for no sewt [she] can favour agayne" (L99-100). This begins an argument between the two over which of them suffers the most, and they eventually leave the stage in order to find a "judge mete" (L243) who can settle their dispute. Lover loved appears at this point, and happily shares that he and his mistress share an equal affection for each other: "For the hyest pleasure that man can obtayne / Is to be a lover beloved agayne" (L300-301). No lover nor loved then enters, and he immediately mocks Lover loved for being a foolish "woodcock" (L323). He argues that having nothing to do with love allows him "contynuall quyetyd rest" (L376), which is the greatest pleasure. These two also agree to decide their debate "By judgement of some indifferent herer" (L387).

When Lover loved departs to find such an arbiter, No lover nor loved begins a lengthy monologue (291 lines) explaining why he is so averse to love. He alleges that he once pretended to have feelings for a beautiful, extremely witty woman but only in order to make fun of her—indeed, he wanted to trick her before she had an opportunity to do the same to him: "For where or whan she lyst to gyve a mock / She coulde and wolde do it beyond the nock" (L485-486). Just when No lover nor loved believed that he had duped her into falling in love with him, he unexpectedly and graphically found "her naked a bed with an other" (L628), laughing at his foolish attempt to deceive her. She had suspected his ruse from the start and only feigned an attachment to him "To gyve mock for mock" (L656). Although he was "made a fole by this woman" (L666), No lover nor loved maintains that he is grateful for the experience because it left him "well sene in the arte of love" (L668) and its dangerous trappings. Soon after when the other characters return to the stage, he uses a significant deception in order to prove further that love causes as much pain as enjoyment: he convinces Lover loved that his lady has been killed in a fire and then laughs at his opponent's ensuing torment. Lover loved, when he realizes that he has been tricked, is forced to admit "That love bryngeth some payne" (Wy1393). He nonetheless argues that experiencing a range of emotions, both agreeable and disagreeable, is better than feeling nothing at all.

After some more wrangling, each character passes judgement on the debate that they have heard, but no clear winners or losers emerge from either pair. Lover loved and No lover nor loved decide that the others' sorrows are equally severe, "one payne in degre" (L1488). Likewise, Lover not loved and Loved not lovyng judge that the pleasures of the other two are identical, "one in regarde" (L1529). Each character, despite the fact that neither argument has been solved, leaves satisfied with his or her own lot. Heywood ends the play with a lesson for the audience: everyone should strive to feel this median satisfaction in life that comes from an understanding of both suffering and happiness. As Lover loved declares, "Thus not we foure but al the worlde beside [. . .] Hath nede of contentacion for a gyde; / Havinge joy or payne, content let us remayne" (L1557-1560). In the final lines, Lover not loved explains the only true way to surpass "such contencion"; "The love of that lovyng Lorde" alone offers "The felyng pleasure of eternall salvacyon" (L1566-1570) and should thus be the primary goal of all Christians.

Most of the comedy in the play revolves around No lover nor loved, a merry trickster who represents the first Vice figure to appear in English secular drama (Johnson 81). First, he uses boisterous action both to frustrate his opponent and to entertain the audience. When all the characters are together for the first time, this very physical comic greets the others by hopping playfully all around them:

> Ye have ben here before me before now,
> And nowe I am here before you,
> And nowe I am here behynde ye,
> And now ye be here, behynde me,
> And nowe we be here evyn both to gether,
> And now we be welcome evyn both hyther;
> Syns nowe ye fynde me here with curtsy I may
> Byd you welcome hyther as I may say. (L705-712)

Soon after when Lover not loved and Loved not lovyng begin presenting their cases, Lover loved becomes irritated by his adversary's sudden disappearance: "Why, where the devyll is this horeson noddy?" (L800). Unperceived by the others, No lover nor loved has climbed up on to a raised table or into the gallery in order to mimic a judge, and he pretends to be angry when the others do not show him adequate respect for his "elevated" position: "Nowe am I a judge and never was serjaunt, / Which ye regarde not much by ought that I see / By any reverence that ye do to me" (L810-812).

The most memorable action of *A Play of Love* is when No lover nor loved tricks Lover loved that his mistress is dead. In a calculated move, he exits the stage momentarily, explaining to the others that he is going to retrieve a book that he has forgotten. He soon re-emerges in a blaze of shouts and fireworks that must have been a strikingly spectacular effect in live performance. As the stage directions outline, "*Here the vyse cometh in ronnyng sodenly aboute the place among the audyens with a hye copyn tank on his hed full of squybs fyred, cryeng 'Water, Water, fyre, fyre, fyre, water, water, fyre,' tyll the fyre in the squybs be spent.*" No lover nor loved tells his opponent that he has just rushed from the fire that killed his mistress. He then looks on gleefully as Lover loved, falling for the ruse, weeps that his "dere hart is dystroyd" (L1315). Heywood has clearly brought the jestbook trickster alive before the audience—indeed, he storms into their very midst! In live performance, No lover nor loved goes far beyond what the likes of Tarlton, Howleglas, or Scogin can offer in print. One can only imagine their antics and pranks after reading about them or listening to them described. The viewers of *A Play of Love*, in contrast, have direct, sensory participation in the madness: they can actually hear, see, and even smell the fireworks exploding as the Vice rushes past them in a display as amusing as it is shocking.

No lover nor loved also entertains the crowd through a number of racy, jestbook-style puns and quips. Many of these are sexual in nature, such as when he tells Lover loved that he has been "at one poynt with woman all: / The smothest, the smyrkest, the smallest, / The trewest, the trymest, the tallest" (L350-352), a list that continues for twelve more lines. No lover nor loved is ostensibly outlining how he has met a wide variety of females and cares for none of them, but at the same time he is slyly bragging that he has slept with them all; the word "poynte" was a popular slang term for penis. No lover nor loved may be proud of his own promiscuity, but he derides women for the same behaviour. When Loved not lovyng, for instance, impatiently asks that a decision be rendered in her case against Lover not loved, the clown responds mischievously, "Tary, ye be to gredy! / Men be not lyke women, alway redy" (L1054-1055).

The Vice uses his monologue to present his funniest verbal joke. His story of a botched prank has many of the same elements as cuckold jests discussed earlier, such as a clever woman, sexual trickery, a deceived lover, and even an "auncyent wise woman" (L617) who assists in her mistress's scheme. Even though he claims that he intended only to mock the lady, No lover nor loved was nonetheless cheated out of what he believed to be his sexual property. The woman had indeed promised to be true to him: "'I in every thyng / As cause gyveth cause wylbe your owne derlyng'" (L575-576). As in most cuckold jests, the mere act of cheating is not enough to be funny in itself; the humour in No lover nor loved's story depends more on the witty, startling way in which he was deceived. Like many joke writers, he employs a reversal device to shock and amuse his audience. Listening to him relate his careful plan to make the woman fall in love with him, the viewers might well expect that his ploy succeeded. No lover nor loved, after all, describes in great detail that she appeared to have strong feelings for him: "I thought swere she loved me perfetly, / And I to shewe my selfe in lyke lovyng / Dyssimyled lyke chere in all her lyke lokyng" (L598-600).. The fact that he so severely underestimated the woman's cunning comes as a great surprise, as much for the listeners as for No lover nor loved himself when he catches his lady "with her bedfelowe" (L629). Ironically, No lover nor loved has brought about his own fear: the woman mocked him as a result of his attempt to avoid this very occurrence—"*mockum moccabitur*" (L570).

No lover nor loved's monologue is intended as light entertainment, yet Heywood also has a dramatic purpose for this jesting situation by allowing us a deeper understanding of the Vice's pessimism towards love. No lover nor loved wants to use his story to control how the audience perceives him, and he thus depicts himself as having "knowledge in lovers laws" (L417) but only in a cool, detached manner. He knows that the audience will unsympathetically laugh at his folly, and he tries to present himself as taking equal pleasure in his own absurdity. After he realized that he had been mocked, for instance, he claims that he "laughed evyn hartely" (L636) at the woman's harsh treatment of him, as it was nothing more for him than a lesson in wit. Always his own worst enemy, however, No lover nor loved reveals subtle, unintentional clues within his speech that indicate he may have had stronger feelings. For instance, he devotes more than fifty lines to praise the woman's extreme beauty and intelligence, but then he insists over and over again that he was never actually in love: "Ye shall understand that I with this maystres / Full late acquaynted and for love no whyt, / But for my pleasure to approve my wyt" (L480-482). These constant, overstated reminders of his emotional detachment are slightly desperate, leaving us room to doubt them. While all this may have begun as a simple prank, he seems to have developed more genuine feelings for the lady that he does not want to openly acknowledge. When he decided "To brynge to ende this ydell dysgysyng" (L606), for example, he reveals that his "harte mysgave" (L609) him and he feared that she would be driven mad by the rejection—again, he would have us believe that "not love, but pety so wrought" (L612) him.

Heywood, then, is taking steps towards creating a more complex individual out of a stock character. Whereas most cuckold jests are concerned solely with the climactic act of deception, here we see the deeper emotional aftermath of such trickery. Although he does not want to admit it, No lover nor loved seems to have experienced firsthand the "jelousy and drede" (L676) that he sees as an integral part of love. The Vice may display signs of realistic feelings but this does not take away from the humour he provides for the play—his story is still a funny jest. Moreover, it is difficult to feel any pity for his suffering. He had decidedly cruel intentions in planning to deceive the woman in the first place, and the audience can laugh further at the fact that he is striving so hard (but ultimately failing) to appear cool and objective about the affair. Heywood only allows us a brief look into No lover nor loved's psyche. As soon as the other characters appear, he reverts back to a traditional, carefree clown: prancing, punning, and pulling pranks.

The Play of the Wether

This play, the last of the debates[7], is much more concerned with entertainment than philosophical analysis. There is more sustained comedy, less scholarly verbiage, a greater supply of amusing characters, and even three songs. *The Play of the Wether* revolves around a number of petitioners asking Jupiter to change the weather to suit their often conflicting and selfish needs. Heywood uses this structure to broaden his humanist critique, although in a light-handed manner: the suitors represent particular classes or occupations, and their opposing demands satirize the frequent squabbling between the various ranks of England's hierarchy. Jupiter, of course, represents Henry VIII (who most likely attended the performance). Using his great wit, the king successfully manages his diverse subjects and their clashing desires.

Similar to *Love*, no known source exists for *Wether,* although there are a number of possible influences. Lucian's "Icaromenippus," for example, features Jupiter listening to many requests for his assistance, some of which concern the elements (Johnson 112). Heywood may have been familiar with Lucian through his connection to More and Erasmus, who were particularly fond of the Greek satirist's ability to mix comedy and serious debate (Sanders, Southern, Craik, and Potter 161-162). Gil Vicente, the Portuguese playwright whose work Erasmus may have introduced to Heywood, likewise portrays Jupiter overseeing an assembly of planets and constellations in *Cortes de Jupiter*, first presented in 1519 (Axton and Happe 48).

Wether begins with Jupiter addressing the audience and explaining that he will meet with "All maner people whyche have been offendyd / By any wether mete to be amendyd" (We88-89). He then asks for volunteers to be his "cryer" (We97), who will either allow the suitors to speak directly with him or report their cases for them if they "be not so worthy" (We170). Mery Report steps forward, and despite his shabby appearance, he is able to convince Jupiter to hire him for the task. He soon becomes preposterously arrogant as "goddes servaunt" (We186). Similar to No lover nor loved pretending to be a judge, he is ridiculously angry when he perceives that the audience does not "Regarde" his unfounded "authoryte" (We192) with more respect.

The petitioners then appear in descending order according to their social status: Gentylman, Marchaunt, Ranger, Water Myller, Wynd Myller, Gentylwoman, Launder, and Boy (Johnson 81). Mery Report allows the first two to speak with Jupiter, but he haughtily insists upon being an intermediary for the others. The arrangement of the characters also emphasizes the conflicting nature of their demands. The first three people, for instance, all request different conditions of wind. The Gentylman, who represents "all come from noble and auncyent stock" (We263), calls for weather that is "Dry and mysty, the wynde calme and styll" (We274) so that he and his peers may enjoy better hunting. Next comes the Marchaunt, who speaks for "marchaunt men thorow the worlde all" (We347). Instead of calm breezes, he beseeches Jupiter for wind that is "mesurable" (We366) and in constantly changing directions so that his ships will sail with "spede most vayleable" (We368). The Ranger then enters, on behalf of "Rangers and kepers of certayne places / As forests, parkes, purlews and chasys" (We412-413). He asks for much more extreme conditions than the other two: a "good rage of blustryng and blowynge" (We425) that will knock down trees and thus give him more work.

Heywood intensifies the debate by having the next two pairs of petitioners, each with opposing demands, appear on the stage at the same time to square off against each other. The first pair consists of the Water Myller, who wants rain but no wind, and the Wynd Myller, who demands "never rayne, but wynde contynuall" (We545). They bicker at great length over whether wind or rain is better for society (and especially for their businesses). Instead of rendering judgement, Mery Report mocks them as "folysh knaves" (We710) and proceeds to distract them with bawdy puns. The next pair is the Gentylwoman, who describes herself as "a woman ryght fayre" (We819), and the Launder, an elderly woman who is wrinkled after years of hard labour. The former wants "No sonne shyne, no frost, nor no wynde to blow" (We831) in order to maintain her beauty and to allow her and her fellow ladies more leisure time. The latter scorns her young adversary for her idleness, which she argues will only lead to sin. Instead of no sunshine, she demands constant light and heat so that her "clothes may dry" (We897).

The final petitioner has no direct opponent but asks for weather completely different from the others. The Boy, described as "*The lest that can play*," is wholly concerned with his childish pastimes: "All my pleasure is in catchynge of byrdes / And makynge of snow ballys and throwyng the same" (We1009-1010). He thus wants "great frost" and "plente of snow" to make his "pytfalls" and "snow ballys" (We1014-1015).

Mery Report, weary of listening to "women, knavys, and boys" (We1053), warns Jupiter that it will be impossible to satisfy all parties: "No one thynge could stand more wyde from the tother. / Not one of theyr sewtes agreed wyth an other" (We1117-1118). Jupiter assures him that he has "foresene remedy" (We1126) and calls for all the petitioners to come before him. His verdict is that no one suitor will win out over the others; rather, the weather will shift continually in order to meet all their needs. The king's subjects are overjoyed with the decision and thank him for his great wisdom. Mery Report, however, realizes that the god has appeased everyone ultimately by changing nothing: "Lo, how this is brought to pas! / Syrs, now shall ye have the wether even as yt was" (We1239-40). Jupiter ends the play boasting that his "prudens hath made peace unyversally" (We1245), and he then returns to his "trone celestyall" (We1254).

In the broadest sense, the humour in *Wether* rests on the absurdity of the suitors each wanting the elements completely changed to meet their narrow desires, made more preposterous by the fact that Jupiter wins them over by doing nothing at all. The interlude is also comical through numerous obscene quips and puns. Mery Report, termed "the vyce" in the title page, is the most notable jokester. He makes dirty jests at every occasion, but he reveals nothing like No lover nor loved's complex psychology. This superficiality seems to support Heywood's overall purpose, however, as *Wether* is not concerned with exploring a profound emotion such as love. Rather, the debate is supposed to be trivial and airily ludicrous in order to point out and poke fun at the foolishness of the petitioners, which is Mery Report's primary function in the proceedings. Heywood holds up the Vice's arrogant behaviour as an absurd, satirical reflection of the self-centred desires of each social class. Mery Report is a rather insignificant, ragged fellow; he introduces himself at the start of the play as "a poore gentylman" (We108), but Jupiter doubts this claim because of his "lyght behavour and araye" (We110). Nevertheless, he very quickly and grandiosely asserts his importance as soon as Jupiter hires him to be his page. As he contemptuously tells the Water Myller later on, "Thou arte nother brother nor felowe to me, / For I am goddes servaunt—mayst thou not se?" (We482-483). Each character, even a meagre clown such as Mery Report, believes that his or her own place in the world is fundamentally important and foolishly fails to recognize the diverse needs of others.

The Vice also uses more direct, intentional insults to attack the other characters' vanity. When he hears the Gentylman announce his arrival by blowing a hunting horn, for example, he uses this as an opportunity for a biting cuckold joke, asking him, "But who maketh al these hornes, your self or your wife?" (We235). Part of the Gentylman's case is that the needs of the nobility are of national significance. He rhetorically asks Jupiter, "what thynge more nedefull then our preservacyon / Beynge the weale and heddes of all comen welth" (We295-296). In response, the Vice plays both semantically and physically with the meaning of "heddes" for some scatological fun: he positions his buttocks as close as he can to the man's face, and brags, "By-god syns ye came hyther / I can set my hedde and my tayle to gyther" (We310). He then makes a rapid series of puns suggesting that he will shit or fart in the Gentylman's face:

> From hens forth I wyll no potycary,
> For at all tymys when suche thynges shall myster,
> My new hed shall geve myne olde tayle a glyster.[8]
> And after all this then shall my hedde wayte
> Uppon my tayle and there stande at recyte.
> Syt, for the reste I wyll not now move you,
> But yf we lyve ye shall smell how I love yow.
> And syr, touchyng your sewt here depart when I please you,
> For be ye suer as I can I wyll ease you. (We312-320)

Here we see Mery Report behaving like the jestbook tricksters by exploiting his lower body and natural functions to tear down the flimsy barriers of rank. This is a carnivalesque inversion, and the Vice is mimicing the "movements" of "popular-festive merriment and grotesque realism": "All of them thrust down, turn over, push headfirst, transfer top to bottom, and bottom to top, both in the literal sense of space, and in the metaphorical meaning of the image" (Bakhtin 370). Mery Report both literally and symbolically flips the head, the high seat of reason and virtue, into a receptacle for the anus, the low "seat" designed crudely to expel waste and gas. In doing so, he degrades the seriousness of social hierarchy, if only for a brief, hilarious moment. He renders the Gentylman ridiculous and laughable by threatening to make him smell or taste his arse—a disgusting prospect for anyone, but especially for a noble who would expect to be treated with proper respect and decorum. Heywood's audience, made up of gentlemen and ladies, are invited to forget momentarily that they themselves would demand the same respect and decorum in the actual world. They can thus laugh without sympathy at the lowly Vice's delightfully scornful and "dirty" treatment of the Gentleman.

Mery Report's cleverest and funniest innuendo comes after the debate between the Water Myller and the Wynd Myller. Mery Report first derides their conceited blindness to the fact that "both myllys may serve in place" (We715), and he then burlesques their argument with a description of his own two mills, which he says are located in a marsh between two hills. In reality, of course, these "mills" are his wife's anus and vagina, "The one for wynde, the other for water" (We725). He gleefully continues with this wordplay to describe her pissing and farting: "The water gate is no sooner open / But 'Clap!' sayth the wyndmyll, even strayght behynde" (We728). The Water Myller plays along and explains that this woman's "choked" (We739) water mill may be due to a "lacke" of "good peckyng" (We744), thus suggesting that the Vice is sexually inadequate. This sets Mery Report off into another dizzying series of puns poking fun at women's stereotypical lechery. For instance, he laments that his wife "wolde have the myll peckt, peckt, peckt every day," which he claims is damaging his genitals through overuse:

> So oft have we peckt that our stones wax ryght thyn
> And all our other gere not worth a pyn,
> For wyth peckynge and peckynge I have so wrought
> That I have peckt a good peckyng yron to nought. (We746-751)

One can imagine the lewd gestures that Mery Report might use to mimic this "peckynge," much to the delight of the audience.

Such obscene banter paves the way for the entrance of the Gentylwoman, with whom Mery Report continues this sexual innuendo:

> *Gentlywoman:* I know not how to passe in to the god now.
>
> *Mery Report*: No, but ye know how he may passe into you.
>
> *Gentylwoman*: I pray you, let me in at the backe syde.
>
> *Mery Report*: Ye, shall I so, and your foresyde so wyde. (We768-771)

Heywood here surpasses even the jestbooks in scurrility—as noted, only a small number of printed English jests deal so explicitly with anal sex and female body parts. Live performance, perhaps, encourages people to allow a greater degree of bawdiness than if reading a joke. The audience, after listening to Mery Report's flurry of racy puns and observing his sexually suggestive frolicking, would likely get caught up in the merry, ribald spirit of the play. More engaged in the comedy presented before them, they might permit more explicit, intense lewdness than under normal, everyday circumstances.

After they sing a song together, the Vice becomes attracted to the Gentylwoman and tries to kiss her: "kys me ons and no more. / I never desyred to kys you before." This provides the Launder, who enters the stage, with an opportunity for her own crude jest:

> Why, have ye alway kyst her behynde?
>
> In fayth good inough yf yt be your mynde.
>
> And yf your appertyte serve you so to do,
>
> Byr lady, I wolde ye had kyst myne arse to. (We866-871)

The Launder is very hostile towards Mery Report because she is worried that he will help the Gentylwoman's case in return for sex. She hurls abusive names at him, such as "olde baudy knave" (We875) and "raylyng knave" (We971), and uses lewd puns to threaten his masculinity if he will not act impartially: "By the mas, knave, I wold I had both thy stones / In my purs yf thou medyl not indyfferently / that both our maters in yssew may be lyckly" (We955-957). Whereas in *Love* only one character gets all the laughs, Heywood distributes the humour in *Wether* more evenly. The Launder displays the great cunning typical of many female characters in the jestbooks. Similar to No lover nor loved's mistress, she is able to engage in battles of wit with men, even the cagey Vice, and handle herself deftly.

The Play of the Wether is heavily indebted to jestbook and fabliau humour. Heywood does not invent these types of farting, arse-kissing, and sex jokes, but, as a skilled dramatist, he moulds and intensifies them carefully for the stage. Because they can see the physical antics of the characters before them, as well as hear these gags coming from their mouths, Heywood's audience has a closer, more direct participation in the comedy than can be achieved by a jest in print. Indeed, this was exactly the style of comedy that most appealed to his particular viewers. While a sharp rift eventually developed between popular and courtly cultures, the royal household of Henry VIII took as much pleasure in both bawdy and scatological humour as did the lower classes.

The Foure PP

This interlude, similar to *Wether,* can be seen as a transition between Heywood's debates and his farces. Its basic structure is a disputation between a palmer, a pardoner, and an apothecary. First, they argue over who best fulfils God's will and then over who is the better liar, with a pedler serving as judge. Heywood has somewhat serious motivations behind the play: satirizing clerical corruption and revealing the path to [illegible] Yet what might appear at first to be a dispute over humanist philosophy soon [illegible] into a riot of fibbing and scurrilous jokes. The centrepiece, for instance, is a lying contest in which the characters tell coarse tales that have no didactic content.

Farce nouvelle d'un Pardonneur, d'un Triacleur, et d'une Taverniere is often cited as having the most direct influence on *The Foure PP*. The squabbling between Heywood's Pardoner and Potycary over the merits of their relics and potions bears close resemblance to the fight between the Pardoner and the Triacleur in this French play (Bolwell 103). At the same time, there are numerous differences between the two works: the inclusion of the Palmer and the Pedler, as well as the lying contest, reflect Heywood's originality (or perhaps suggest that he was influenced by other unknown sources). Heywood's Pardoner is also inspired by Chaucer's Pardoner in *The Canterbury* Tales, who similarly sells relics of questionable religious value for profit (Bolwell 104). While Heywood certainly knew of (and in another interlude quotes) Chaucer, he clearly played off of a long tradition of poking fun at the clergy's many sins. As noted, numerous jests, particularly those written before the Reformation, circulated during Heywood's time that depict priests, friars, and bishops as unlearned, as sexually promiscuous, or as thieves.

The Foure PP begins with the entrance of the Palmer, who lists the numerous shrines he has visited both in England and abroad. His virtue is true and his holy mission is clear: "Who seketh sayntes for Crystes sake [. . .] Shall therby meryte more hyely / Then by any thynge done by man" (4P59-63). The shady Pardoner enters and laughs at him for going on arduous pilgrimages when he could more easily attain salvation by purchasing a relic. Because pardoners were notorious for being corrupt, the Palmer rightfully doubts this man's honesty: "Truely a pardoner that may be true / But a true pardoner doth nat ensew" (4P107-108). The Potycary, who also proves to be deceitful, arrives at this point and declares that *he* best helps people by giving them drugs to die peacefully. This, he claims, allows their souls to "be separate" from the body and "entreth heven gate" (4P169-170). Finally, the Pedler enters, representing yet another social type known for its fraudulence. He provides a digression from the argument by attempting to sell his wares and then by singing a duet with the fun-loving Potycary.

The Pardoner soon grows cross with this "dalyaunce" (4P326) and wants to return to the debate. Instead of declaring a winner, the Pedler proposes that the three men join forces: "For eche of you somwhat doth showe / That soules towarde heven by you do growe" (4P390-391). This plan, however, necessitates choosing one to guide the other two. The Pedler explains that, since the "thre can lye as well / As can the falsest devyll in hell" (4P442-443), he could judge which is the best liar and let this man be the leader. Even the truthful Palmer agrees to the challenge, although he is "loth" (4P453) to fib. Before the lying contest begins, the Pardoner tries to argue that he should be in command because his relics could provide them all with money. The Potycary, clearly not willing to submit to another's rule so easily, declares that these relics "stynke" (4P537) and compares most of them to useless turds. He argues that his own elixirs provide much greater wealth than "relykes that do no myrakell" (4P585). Having stated how rich he is, he then attempts (and fails) to bribe the Pedler with "a boxe of marmelade" (4P642).

The contest involves each competitor attempting to tell the most ludicrous story. Surprisingly, the Palmer lies best, and the Pedler declares him to be the winner.

Although the Pardoner and the Potycary grudgingly accept this decision, the Palmer is irritated with them and allows them to go free. As he explains to the Pedler, "Syr, I am nat on them so fonde / To compell them to kepe theyr bonde" (4P1131-1132). While those who are morally questionable may enjoy the company of such unscrupulous liars, the Palmer demonstrates that a virtuous man should be glad to part ways with them.

To conclude the play, the Pedler offers serious advice to his companions (and to the audience) about the way to Heaven. He explains to both the Palmer and the Pardoner that any man, no matter what his particular calling is, may do good if he follows the one true faith: "All though [men] be of sondry kyndes, / Yet be they nat used with sondry myndes, / But as God only doth all those move" (4P1165-1167). He also admonishes the Potycary to stop doubting the power of relics and pardons, even if they appear dubious, because mere mortals are not meant to judge such things: "But as the churche doth judge or take them, / So do ye recyve or forsake them" (4P1213-1214). In the closing lines, the Palmer further advises all to obey God's wishes and submit to "hys churche universall" (4P1234). With this ending, Heywood places limits on his own humour. While *The Foure PP* pokes fun at the vices of certain *individuals* who pretend to serve God, he makes it clear that the Church as an *institution*, the Lord's own tool on earth, should be beyond reproach.

Although he is not explicitly referred to as such, the Potycary displays many Vice characteristics. Similar to No lover nor loved, for instance, he brings physical energy to the stage with his amusing capering. When he first hears about the lying contest, he begins to "*hoppeth*" about. Of all the characters, he is most open about his lack of virtue, even admitting at one point that his "craft" will "Send [his] fryndes to heven and [him] selfe to hell" (4P406-407). Shamelessly duplicitous, he feels supremely confident in his ability to lie better than any one else, and he expresses this excitement in unrestrained jumping. To the amusement of the audience, the Palmer is amazed and annoyed at such buffoonery: "Here were a hopper to hop for the rynge! / But syr, thys gere goth nat by hoppynge" (4P467-468).

The Potycary also displays great verbal dexterity and a playfully dirty turn of mind. While inspecting the Pedler's goods, which consist mainly of women's "tryflynges," he makes a number of puns about his wife's insatiable sexual appetite and his own inadequate penis. First, he jokingly scolds the Pedler for "makynge [his] wyfeys pyncase so wyde / The pynnes fall out—they can nat abyde" (4P247-248). He claims that, as a result, she hungers for "New pynnes to her pleasure and [his own] payne" (4P252). Again using clothing terms, the Potycary describes *all* women as whores who cannot be satisfied by their husbands. According to him, ladies are always "fydlyng with the tayle pyn," and "If it chaunce to double in the clothe,"—that is, to go limp—"Then be they wode and swereth an othe" (4P267-270). He sums up his humorous complaint with this rhyme: "But prycke them and pynne them as myche as ye wyll / And yet wyll they loke for a pynnynge styll" (4P274-275). Like Mery Report's description of "peckyng," the term "pynnyng" takes on scurrilous associations for repeated laughs.

The highlight of the play is the lying contest, which is in many ways a satire of the scholarly humanist debate used in *Witty* and *Love*. Instead of rationally considering a moral or philosophical issue, these men settle their dispute with three coarse, outlandish falsehoods without the least pretence of intellectual discussion. The Potycary, who goes first, tells a story that continues with his lewd innuendo; as Robert Bolwell explains, this is "a tale of vulgarity matched only in jest-book literature. It is almost too crude for the *fabliau* type in which Heywood delighted" (102). The Potycary describes how he once helped cure a young woman from "the fallen sykness" (4P713)—epilepsy—by giving her a suppository and then sticking "a thampyon"—a tampon—up "her tewell" (4P732)—her arse. The resulting pressure had preposterously destructive effects, which the Potycary likens to a cannon shot:

> Sodeynly, as it had thonderd
> Even at a clap losed her bumberd.
> Now marke, for here begynneth the revell:
> This tampion flew ten long myle levell
> To a fayre castell of lyme and stone— (4P740-744)

The castle was instantly destroyed, with "No stone lefte standynge, by Goddes mother" (4P753). The woman, however, was happily "delyvered, with suche violens / Of all her inconveniens" (4P765-766).

The Pardoner goes next, sharing an even taller tale about his journey to Hell in search of a female friend's soul. His description of the netherworld is highly imaginative and detailed, perhaps to give it a greater sense of realism and certainly to show off his storytelling ability. He vividly shares, for instance, how he saw devils anointing their bodies "With Sothery butter" (4P879), souls "playnge at racket" (4P882), and Lucifer himself "Gnashynge hys teeth so vaynglorousely" (4P901). The climax of the story is the devils' great relief, expressed by roaring, singing, and shaking their chains, that a troublesome woman was taken from their midst. As Lucifer admitted, "For all we devyls within thys den / Have more to do with two women / Then with all the charge we have besyde" (4P937-939).

The Palmer's lie is not a story, but rather a clever reaction to the blatant misogyny of the Pardoner's tale. He exclaims that the most "mervaylous" (4P982) part was that the devils found women to be "so croked and crabbed, / Frowardly fashonde, so waywarde and wrabbed" (4P985-986). He argues that in the course of his travels, meeting "fyve hundred thousande" (4P998) women along the way, he never met one who was "out of paciens" (4P1003). Even the Pedler has fun bashing the faults of women later in the play. To justify choosing the Palmer as the best liar, he explains that if you inspected any three women at random, no matter their age, class, or intelligence, "two justly by nomber / Shall by founde shrewes—excepte thys fall, / That ye hap to fynde them shrewes all" (4P 1078-1080).

This contest is, in essence, a jesting situation presented onstage. Whereas No lover nor loved's story of his backfiring prank was a single anecdote aimed directly at the audience, *The Foure PP* depicts a broader range of jokes, three distinctive styles of communicating these jokes, and the characters' own reactions to them. While this specific contest is far-fetched (choosing the best liar to become master over the losers), Heywood realistically recreates the basic premise behind such public storytelling: a group of wits trying to outdo each other through bravado and sexual license would have been a familiar sight at court, in the tavern, and in private households. Thus, here we see jesting serving a function beyond mere entertainment. Gags and puns are also a public representation of cleverness, ingenuity, and oratory skills, all attributes that allow people to judge each other. As noted, the courtier's handbooks recognized this evaluative feature of jesting, but they cautioned against obscenity because it made a gentleman appear buffoonish and lowbred. Granted, the characters in *The Foure PP* are not courtiers and thus do not have the same public appearance of noble breeding and distinction to uphold. Nevertheless, their falsehoods demonstrate that indecent humour could serve as a clear indicator of wit and was a powerful tool to win over a crowd. As the Pedler points out at the end of the play, the scurrilous Potycary may lack virtue, but he is nonetheless "well loved of all thys sorte"—meaning the audience—"through raylynge here openly / At pardons and relyqyes so leudly" (4P1200).

Heywood is also careful to shape each story realistically as a reflection of the teller's unique personality. The Potycary, for instance, who loves bawdy and excremental wordplay, tells a fib of great obscenity, made even more indecent by the fact that it involves the buttocks and bowel movements of a woman. The arrogant Pardoner relies less on vulgarity; his story is a blatant lie, but he nonetheless tries to impress his listeners by exaggerating his importance in divine matters. Not only does he claim to be able to leave the temporal world as "a controller" (4P918) of souls, he describes at length the respect and admiration he earns in Hell. The first devil he met was an "olde acqueyntaunce" who showed him "ryght frendly favoure" (4P834), and the mighty Lucifer likewise smiled on him "well favoredly" (4P896). The Palmer also reflects his own self-image in the lie that he tells. He has presented himself as a humble, God-fearing man; thus, he does not describe himself having accomplished some momentous feat like curing a disease or travelling to Hell. Rather, he intentionally makes himself appear blindly optimistic by claiming that women are not shrewish. His lie, then, appears more "genuine" in the sense that it is consistent with his overall personality.

The other characters' responses to what they see as the Palmer's absurd falsehood about women are instant and uproarious:

> *Potycary*: By the masse, there is a great lye!
>
> *Pardoner*: I never harde a greater, by Our Lady.
>
> *Pedler*: A greater! Nay, knowe ye any so great? (4P1004-1006).

These shocked remarks are humorous in their own right, and they add to the gaiety of the entire scene. They also reflect how the actual spectators may have reacted to the Palmer's claim that he never met a disagreeable woman. It is important to note that Heywood would not simply be appealing to the men in the audience; he wants to entertain, not to offend, and thus would expect that female viewers would enjoy a good-natured ribbing of their stereotypical flaws. One could question, after all, whether the ladies in the audience would have felt genuinely threatened by insults from these shameless, lowly rascals. Moreover, the characters' remarks add realism to this jesting situation: this is a battle of wits, and each speaker wants to impress the others in order to win. The Palmer, recognizing his companions' ingrained prejudices about women, has cleverly surprised them by appearing naively generous with his praise. The fact that the Potycary, the Pardoner, and the Pedler are moved to shout out their disbelief so boisterously, a response that none of the other tales elicits, clearly establishes the Palmer as the best liar.

Heywood uses *The Foure PP* to explore the physical and public possibilities of jests in two distinct ways. First, whereas in a printed jestbook only the written punch line provides the humour, here we see a range of comical action, such as dancing and rude gesturing, mixed with quips and puns. Second, in depicting a jesting situation, Heywood looks at some of the social ramifications of joke-telling: the ways in which humorous stories can be moulded in different ways by individuals, and the ways that these individuals' respective wit and intelligence is gauged by the quality of jokes that they share. Heywood also expands on the public potential of jests by presenting them onstage. This is not a single person reading a joke from a book, or a small group of people sharing stories amongst themselves; *The Foure PP* is presented in front of a large group of spectators, engaging them all in the comedy both visually and orally. Just as the characters' reactions to the lying contest makes the scene funnier, the audience laughter adds to the overall humour of the play. It is, in effect, a laugh track that encourages even more infectious giggles among the participants as the action proceeds.

The Pardoner and The Frere

This is one of Heywood's two "pure" farces in that it is free of didactic and intellectual content. Its depiction of a crooked pardoner and friar attempting to elicit money resembles *The Foure PP*'s presentation of a pardoner and an apothecary as corrupt liars. The biggest difference between the two plays, however, is in the ending. *The Pardoner and the Frere* is intended only to amuse the audience and has no humanist message about the need for a more sincere loyalty to the Church and to God. Certainly the audience is not expected to have much sympathy for either the Pardoner or the Frere, but Heywood does not explicitly condemn their trickery. Rather, the conclusion of the play is a boisterous, slapstick fight, first between themselves and followed by the two rogues joining forces against a curate and his constable. They escape freely, in typical farce fashion. The closest Heywood comes to a moral is their last line as they rush off the stage, which playfully suggests that they both belong in Hell: "Than adew, to the devyll, tyll we come agayn!" (PF640).

Many of the same sources behind *The Foure PP* also influenced *The Pardoner and the Frere*, although to a stronger degree. The structure of this interlude, for instance, is similar to *Farce nouvelle d'un Pardonneur, d'un Triacleur, et d'une Taverneire*, which presents a pardoner and an apothecary showing off their wares and then insulting each other. Heywood, however, significantly changes the ending. In the French play, the two men are about to come to blows, but then they conspire together to pull a prank on a hostess, leaving her a pair of soiled breeches (Maxwell 71-72). *The Pardoner and the Frere* fulfills the expectation of violence between the adversaries, and then it has them unite to carry out even more violence against their pursuers. Heywood was also inspired by Chaucer (who himself drew from the French fabliaux and farces). Chaucer's Pardoner openly explains his moneymaking schemes and scams to the other pilgrims; in *The Pardoner and the Frere*, we see these same tactics put to use by both characters. Heywood makes little attempt to hide his indebtedness to his predecessor: his Pardoner copies over fifty lines directly from "The Pardoner's Prologue" in his own opening speech (Axton and Happe 38).

The action begins with the Frere speaking to the crowd as if they were in a church. Indeed, the audience can be described as a silent character in *The Pardoner and the Frere*, representing the church congregation to whom both men advertise their services. The Frere claims again and again that he intends only to "edyfe" (PF14) the souls of the onlookers and cares nothing "for monye nor for rent" (PF6). This constant attempt to appear humble and virtuous, however, is quite transparent—he is obviously after donations. As he kneels to pray, the Pardoner enters and displays his relics, each of which appears highly suspicious: a bone from "a holy Jewes shepe" (PF115), a toe from the Holy Trinity, a holy mitten, the Virgin Mary's bongrace (or veil), and the All Hallow's "blessyd jaw bone" (154). To emphasize his own divine importance (in effect, to make his goods appear more genuine), he declares that he has come with papal authority: "But fyrst ye shall knowe well that I cam fro Rome— / Lo, here my bulles, all and some!" (PF97-98).

As the Pardoner describes his fraudulent bulls and seals in greater detail, the Friar begins to deliver his sermon at the same time. Heywood seems to want the audience to understand each man's lines, but the overall effect is loud and confusing. The two speakers certainly find each other's intrusion to be a distracting annoyance:

> *Frere*: In scrypture eke—but I say, syrs, how?
> *Pardoner*: Ay, by the mas, one can not here
> *Frere*: What a bablynge maketh yonder felow!
> *Pardoner*: For the bablynge of yonder folysshe frere. (PF210-213)

Eventually, their mutual frustration overcomes them, and they order each other to keep quiet. Each clergyman argues that he is best able to help people earn salvation, and both make preposterous claims about their own authority. The Frere, for example, warns that "he that lettyth the worde of God of audyence / Standeth accurst in the great sentence" (PF262-263). The Pardoner counters by threatening his adversary with "excommunycacyon" (PF267) and also declares him to be "a traytor to the kynge" (PF271). This structure repeats itself another two times: both men speaking at the same time and then stopping to make outrageous, ineffectual threats at each other.

Near the end of the play, their tempers escalate into pushing and shoving. As the Frere warns the Pardoner, "yf you playe me such another touche, / Ish' knocke the on the costarde, I wolde thou it knewe" (PF520-521). Finally, they begin to punch each other, and they only cease when the Parson enters and shouts for peace. They have not asked for his permission to sell their services in his church, and he angrily promises that they will repent "this wranglyng" (PF571). When he calls on Prat (a slang term for "ass") to help him arrest the two rogues, the fighting begins again, "*Prat with the Pardoner, and the Parson with the Frere*." The Pardoner and the Frere eventually run offstage, leaving the curate and his constable bloodied and in pain.

There are only a few, relatively minor incidences of sexual humour in *The Pardoner and the Frere*. One is particularly notable because it reflects the influence of Chaucer, but also possibly the influence of jests. When the Pardoner first appears, he makes a special plea to "ye women all" (PF173). He advises that any who had committed serious crimes, especially any who "hathe made her husbande cockolde" (PF178), should not purchase his relics because they do not work for unrepentant sinners. The Pardoner, of course, is attempting to prey on the female viewers' sense of honour and public respectability. Realizing that no woman wants to be seen as a whore by her peers (even if she really is one), he hopes that they will all buy his goods as a sign of their virtue. This part of the play is taken almost word for word from *The Pardoner's Prologue* (lines 64-73). Yet the scheme may have been familiar to both Heywood and his audience from jestbooks as well. Howleglas, who first appeared in print around the same time as Heywood's interludes, employs the identical ploy. In Tale #20, as noted earlier, he disguises himself as a pardoner selling relics and urges that women who "made her husbands cuckold should sit still and come not to offer" (184). Likewise, Scogin tricks a group of angry ladies into not beating him by calling on "the strongest whore" (Tale #50, 122) to step forward and strike him first. Heywood is definitely borrowing directly from Chaucer, but this example of trickery may have been popular on its own, passed down from *The Pardoner's Prologue* (if, indeed, Chaucer did not borrow it himself from another source) to appear in new variations in humorous stories. Some of these were printed in collections such as *Howleglas* and *Scogin's Jests*, and others probably circulated orally. Heywood, then, would be presenting for his audience a comical deception that they would still find recognizable and current, even if it was at least 150 years old by this point.

The major laughs in the interlude come from the Pardoner's and the Frere's mounting frustrations and recriminations. Speaking to the audience in unison, they create a cacophony that only increases in volume as they try to outdo each other:

> *Frere*: What? Sholde ye gyve ought to pratyng pardoners?
> *Pardoner*: What? Sholde ye spende on these flaterynge lyers
> *Frere:* What? Sholde ye gyve ought to these bolde beggars?
> *Pardoner:* As be these bablynge monkes and these freres [. . .]. (PF436-439)

The comedy culminates in their vicious fight, an incident which shatters their gross pretensions: although both had claimed to be important emissaries from God and the Pope, here they reveal themselves as mere rogues who can only solve their dispute with blows. Their dirty style of fighting—pulling, biting, and scratching—further strips them of any honour or dignity in the eyes of the audience:

> *Frere*: Lose thy handes away from myn earys!

Pardoner: Than take thou thy handes away from my heres! (PF539-40)

When the Curate and Prat enter the fray, the violence becomes even more over-the-top. Here, Heywood energizes the physical action for the audience in a way only possible in drama; he allows them to actually see and hear the scuffling, cries of pain, and angry facial expressions.

Johan Johan

The other "pure" farce, this interlude focuses on the hapless Johan Johan struggling against his domineering wife, Tyb, and her conniving lover, the priest Sir Johan. The plot is very close to modern standards: Johan's ongoing torments take place in a realistic domestic setting, and there is none of the artificial debate structure that characterizes many of Heywood's other plays; as a farce, the main intent of *Johan Johan* is to entertain, not to provide moral instruction. Johan is able to punish his wife's and Syr Johan's treachery at the end of the play, but his victory is fleeting. They escape to continue their sexual relations, and Johan is ultimately left as insecure as ever over Tyb's infidelity.

Johan Johan is not actually an original work of Heywood's. Rather, it is a close translation of an anonymous French play, *Farce nouvelle et fort joyeuse du Paste et est a trois personnaiges. C'est assavoir: l'Homme, la Femme, le Cure*, probably printed around 1500. Heywood borrows much of the dialogue, the props, and the plot sequence. Yet similar to the way English jestbook writers "anglicized" foreign jokes, he crafts subtle changes to give *Johan Johan* a more native feel. For instance, he includes references to London locales, such as "Temmes Strete" (J115) and "the churche of Poules" (J153), and gives the wife a more English-sounding name, "Tyb." He also replaces the names of French saints (used in numerous oaths) with more English ones, including "our lady of Crome" (J10), "saynt Mary" (J152), and "swete saynt Dyryk" (J146) (Axton and Happe 36-37). The biggest difference between the two plays, however, is in the ending. In *Farce nouvelle du Paste*, the man beats the priest and his wife off the stage, and his final lines are a proud battle cry: "Go on, priest! Go on, priest! / At him, at him, at him, at him!" (765-766). *Johan Johan* also ends with the lead character assaulting his wife and her lover, yet his victory is much less conclusive, as we shall see.

The play opens with Johan asking the spectators if they know "whyther [his] wyfe is gone?" (J2). He shares with them that he will punish her severely for her promiscuity: "I shall bete her and thwak her I trow, / That she shall beshyte the house for very wo" (J31-32). Yet despite such bold threats, he keeps wavering: first he fears that he will "be hanged shortly" (J20) for killing her, and then he worries that a beating will not be enough to "amende" (23) her. Another of his concerns, "worst of all," is that his neighbours will laugh at him when they hear him and Tyb "brall" (J47-48). He finally decides that he was right from the start: as a man, it is his "pleasure" (J57) to treat his wife as he sees fit, even using physical force to keep her meek and obedient. As soon as Tyb enters, however, Johan loses his resolve and it becomes clear who is *really* in charge of this household:

> *Tyb*: Why, whom wylt thou beate, I say, thou knave?
>
> *Johan*: Who, I, Tyb? None so God me save.
>
> *Tyb*: Yes, I harde the say thou woldest one bete.
>
> *Johan*: Mary, wyfe, it was stokfysshe in Temmes Strete

Whiche wyll be good meate agaynst Lent. (J111-115)

This type of exchange repeats itself throughout the play: Johan mutters many empty threats in asides to the audience, yet he backs off cowardly whenever Tyb catches wind of his grumbling.

A standard shrew, and thus openly hostile towards her husband, Tyb constantly berates Johan with a barrage of insults, complaints, and commands. At the same time, she is also clever enough to control him in more subtle ways. During their opening discussion, she tells him repeatedly to go invite Syr Johan to come share their pie. Yet each time he is ready to leave, she calls him back to do some domestic chore (which should be her responsibility). For instance, she orders him to "brynge hether yender stole" (J273) and to "brynge hyther that breade" (J297). When Johan stops to do these things, she scolds him for not having left to fetch their guest: "What art thou not gone yet out of this place?" (J306). Her husband is obviously bewildered by such conflicting demands, and he complies without question. Johan attempts to explain his predicament with an apt proverb: "He must nedes go that the dyvell dryveth" (J313).

Johan finally proceeds to the priest's house, where Syr Johan confesses that he has tempted Tyb on many occasions but only in order to test her faithfulness. He claims that she passed every time: "I do lye uppon her, many a tyme and oft / To prove her, yet could I never espy / That ever any dyd wors with her than I" (J350-352). He also says that he has attempted to help their marriage by ordering her to cease her "chydyng and brawlyng" (J364). Johan, believing his priest, confides to the audience, "But was I not a very knave? [. . .] here I se / He doth as much as he may for his lyfe, / To styn[t] the debate betweene me and my wyfe" (J369-374). The two men head off for dinner, with Johan naively giving Syr Johan permission to further "chastyce" (J415) Tyb.

Once he observes the close familiarity and flirting between them, Johan's suspicions return. Syr Johan removes any doubt over Tyb's infidelity in the minds of the audience when he jokes with her about the lies he has just told her husband, "The toys, the mokkes, the fables, and the nyfyls" (J432). Tyb then tries to find more chores to keep Johan occupied and out of the way. When she orders him to go fetch water in a pail, he soon returns and shows her that the pail is broken; in a wildly theatricalized sexual image, it has "a clyfte, both large and wyde" (J447). Syr Johan gives him some wax, and Tyb commands her husband to chafe it and then use it to fix the pail. As a symbol of their carnal gratification, she and Syr Johan enjoy the pie, as Johan looks on hungrily by the fireside. Although the fire is burning him and his fingers are sore, he is not brave enough to confront them but instead mumbles harmless threats and insults. Tyb clearly enjoys watching her spouse suffer: "Now by my trouth, it is a prety jape / For a wyfe—to make her husband her ape" (J513-514).

Once they are finished eating, Tyb and Syr Johan both feign shock and dismay that Johan has received neither food nor drink:

> *Tyb*: But is it trewe?
>
> *Johan*: Ye, for a surete.
>
> *Tyb*: Dost thou ly?
>
> *Johan*: No, so mote I the!
>
> *Tyb*: Hast thou had nothyng?
>
> *Johan*: No, not a byt.

Tyb: Hast thou not dronke?

Johan: No, not a whyt. (J629-632)

Johan has had enough at this point: he refuses to chafe the wax anymore and states that the pail is beyond repair. Tyb assaults him when she sees that her bucket is broken, promising to "make the blood ronne about his erys" (J650)—unlike her cowardly husband, she carries through with her threats! A scuffle ensues involving all three characters, and Johan is finally able to beat the other two out of his house. At first, he stands flush with victory: "A, syrs, I have payd some of them even as I lyst" (J665). Nevertheless, he soon becomes jealous as he wonders what Tyb and Syr Johan will be doing when they are alone. He fears (rightly so) that they "Wyll make [him] cokold, evyn to anger [him]" (J675). He runs off in an attempt to stop their "vylany" (J677), a plan that promises only more violence and misery for the feeble hero.

Johan Johan does more than use jest-style humour in certain parts. Similar to *The Pardoner and the Frere*, it *is* an enacted jest or fabliau, combining many of the same elements analyzed in the previous chapter: the foolish cuckold, the conniving shrew, and the lecherous clergyman. Yet in the hands of a skilled dramatist (both the anonymous French writer and Heywood), the hackneyed joke format becomes a much richer, much funnier comedy, with an array of amusing sight gags and more fleshed-out characters. Similar to No lover nor loved, for instance, Johan is closer to a realistic, complex individual rather than a mere type. His opening monologue allows a detailed exploration into the cheated husband's anxiety, shame, and rage. He is painfully aware that his masculinity has been stolen and that others are mocking him for it. In addition, Heywood adds "mental conflict" to complement "the physical conflict" (Johnson 119) at the play's close: Johan may have beaten his wife and her lover, but he will eternally agonize over Tyb's disloyalty. When Johan expresses his bitter resentment and anxieties, it is possible to feel sympathy towards him as a realistic human being and to relate to his turbulent emotions. Shorter, more simplistic jests, by contrast, provide little room for such character development. The focus is more on the climatic act of deception or on the husband finding out that he has been cheated. If the cuckold's feelings of jealousy, anger, and embarrassment are mentioned in jests, it is solely to elicit laughter, and not to make him pitiable. This is not to argue, however, that the audience can feel pity towards Johan for very long.

As Bergson argues, we must silence our hearts if we are to laugh at someone; the comic "*must not arouse our feelings*" (151). Once Tyb appears, Johan's inability to stand up for himself, alongside his flimsy threats, makes him utterly laughable. He is rigidly and absent-mindedly a coward; thus, it is this "unsociability" (Bergson 150) that makes him deserving of scorn. Indeed, his timidity is more ludicrous because it comes after such fierce bravado at the start of the play, when his wife is absent. Tyb may be immoral, but she is socially adaptable, and thus we laugh with her rather than at her.

Johan Johan also allows a close intimacy between the audience and performers that is not possible when merely reading or listening to a jest. Similar to many of Heywood's other interludes, the viewers not only observe the action unfolding before them, but they are also spoken to directly, effectively bringing them *into* the action. At one point, for instance, Johan seeks out an audience member to hold his coat: "Therfore I pray you take ye the payne / To kepe my gowne tyll I come agayne" (J250-251). In yet another display of indecisiveness, Johan frets that this spectator is "so nere the dore he myght ron away" (J253) with the coat, and he thus asks another person who looks more "trusty and sure" (J254). As is the case in *The Pardoner and the Frere*, the audience can be implicated as a silent character in this play. Johan is acutely aware that others are both watching and judging him. In his opening speech, as noted, he reveals great anxiety in the fact that those around him can observe his inability to master his wife, which is expected of him as a man; his "worst" fear is that "folks wyll mocke" (J47-48) him for such impotence. It seems, then, that the spectators play the role of these "folks," the outsiders to whom Johan appeals through the course of the play. He wants to curry favour with them by revealing his wife's treachery and by promising harsh revenge against her. Foolishly, he does not realize that his absent-minded cowardice causes others to do exactly what he dreads: laugh at him.

Heywood further engages his audience with the use of physical action and comical props. Such action allows them, visually and physically, to experience the jest as well as laugh at the racy, energetic humour. The raucous fight between Johan, Tyb, and Syr Johan, a plot device typical of farces, is the most striking example. The build-up to the scuffle, with Johan chafing the wax as he is denied his dinner, is also very entertaining and wickedly bawdy. The pail and the wax, after all, symbolize his sexual frustration. Because he has failed to satisfy his wife, he is left with only a broken pail, which has "a clyfte, both large and wyde," representing Tyb's great lust and her unquenchable vagina. The wax candles, in turn, represent Johan's inadequate genitals. He must make them softer in order to fill the cleft (an amusing inversion of the male erection), but he fails miserably. He can only rub and rub the wax, which is probably positioned between his legs, in a kind of masturbatory torture as he watches his wife flirt with her lover. The pie, then, symbolizes Tyb's and Syr Johan's coitus: they flaunt their enjoyment of the meal in front of the Johan as an unabashed sign of their infidelity. At the same time, however, the pie can be seen as an actual pie, and Johan seems genuinely hungry for food as well as sex: "And how now, what wyll ye do with the py? / Shall I not ete therof a morsell?" (J476-477). Indeed, this makes Johan even more laughably pathetic: he finally loses his temper and asserts his manhood, not in direct response to his wife's blatant lechery, but because his belly is empty!

Johan Johan also contains an embedded jesting situation, which provides an amusing distraction to the tension of the pie-eating scene. As they are enjoying their meal, Tyb asks Syr Johan to tell "some tale of myrth or sadnes" as a "pastyme" (J530-531). The priest proceeds to relate "thre myracles" (J533), each involving women engaging in pre- or extra-marital sex.[9] First, he tells of a sailor who returned from a seven-year voyage to find that his wife had seven children in his absence. Syr Johan jokingly confesses his contribution to the "miracle": "Yet had she not had so many by thre / Yf she had not the help of me" (J546-547). The second wonder involves a woman who had been married many times (thus, she had a long sexual history) but had no children. She went on a pilgrimage to "Saynt Modwin" (J561) and gave birth to a baby one month later—presumably, the gag here is that she was secretly pregnant before she left. Lastly, the priest shares a similar anecdote in which a woman got married and delivered a baby after only five months; it is quite clear that another man, very likely Syr Johan himself, played a part in her pregnancy four months before the marriage.

While this scene does not play as pivotal a role as the lying contest does in *The Foure PP*, it nevertheless reveals information about the storyteller. The audience has already witnessed Syr Johan's amorous banter with Tyb, and Johan has previously explained that this priest has a sordid reputation in the community: "Many an honest wyfe" has visited him "For to make some pastyme and sporte" (J92-93). With these "miracles," Syr Johan offers further evidence of his sinful past and reveals that he feels no guilt for his crimes. The fact that he blasphemously shapes such bawdy jests as "miracles" suggests that he does not take his ecclesiastical responsibilities very seriously, an implicit humanist critique of clerical corruption. He is solely concerned with his and his lover's pleasure, and he tells these anecdotes for their "recreacyon" (J532)—and to infuriate Johan as he sits chafing by the fire.

Although it is impossible to say whether Heywood adapted *Johan Johan* after his other plays, it appears to be a culmination of his dramatic and comedic advancements. The moral taglines and scholarly dialect that distinguish *Witty*, *Love*, and parts of *Wether* and *The Foure PP* have been replaced with farcical humour that is meant solely to amuse. Jests and the act of jesting are not mere digressions in *Johan Johan* and *The Pardoner and the Frere*; rather, they have been activated onstage and become the focus of the entertainment. In these interludes, Heywood also makes steps towards including physical action that is integral to the narrative, beyond the relatively insignificant incidents of dancing and tumbling. The slapstick fight scenes in *Johan Johan* and *The Pardoner and the Frere* are cohesive parts of the story: these are the climaxes that allow the characters of both plays to vent their mounting vexations. Heywood owes a huge debt to French writers for his farces, especially for *Johan Johan*, but he should be given credit for recognizing their comedic potential and shaping them for his English audience, who had not experienced before such raucous stagecraft.

These six interludes show the influence of jests and jestbooks in three distinct ways. First, Heywood includes much the same humour about women's lust and scolding natures, men's sexual inadequacy, and the lower bodily functions, which his characters express through innuendo and rude insults. In the debates, which are meant to teach, this comedy is used mainly to add spice to scholarly deliberations; in the farces, which are meant to delight, such gags are brought increasingly to the forefront. Second, he recreates jest-style characters and situations. The mischievous, lively Vice figures closely resemble the jestbook tricksters, and farces such as *The Pardoner and the Frere* and *Johan Johan* are modelled after jest or fabliau story lines. Third, half of the interludes depict jesting situations in which characters tell humorous stories to each other and to the audience. These situations are realistically constructed: the tales are often a reflection of their speakers, and they reveal the many different uses for telling jokes beyond entertainment (despite what the tellers might intend for them, of course, their primary function is to amuse the audience).

Heywood created comedies unique to England for his time by drawing on a vast tradition of humour from a variety of genres. As noted, he borrows from the farces (themselves closely related to the fabliau), which already had a long history in French drama. He also adopts jests, but in his skilled hands they become more elaborate, more stimulating, and more amusing. The viewers are presented with an audio-visual spectacle: they can closely observe and hear the characters, the stories, and especially the physical action of jests that are animated before them. Indeed, Heywood often wants his audience to join in the fun themselves, such as when the performers joke directly with them or when a character such as No lover nor loved explodes through their midst towards the stage. To create this jesting pageant, Heywood is indebted to the improvisational jester. He may mock Will Somers for idleness in *Witty*, but nonetheless he is attempting to harness the spirit of the professional clown in realized stage action. Thus, his interludes depict jest-style characters and plots, yet they are injected with the live energy, physical movement, and interactive play of the jester.

Heywood's influence as a playwright should not be overestimated. As Johnson notes, "To say that Heywood was the 'Father' of English comedy is misleading; for one finds no legitimate sons" (135). His contemporaries and later writers praised him for his mirth but mainly because of his humorous epigrams; no other playwrights of his period copied the model of his interludes. It was not until the Elizabethan period that writers produced similar comic characters and plots, yet "to be occasionally reminded of Heywood when reading these later writers is not to claim an influence" (Johnson 135). Nevertheless, he deserves more credit than he is often granted for his early experiments in secular comedy. He was working at time when England was creating and moulding its dramatic conventions—the permanent professional stage and professional actors did not appear until the next generation. In forging this new dramatic ground, he adapted and borrowed from many comedic forms, as well as song and dance, all of which vitalize his work with riotous play and bold innovation. Although he may not have directly influenced later dramatists, Heywood's work should be viewed as an adventurous, entertaining sojourn on the journey from medieval drama to Elizabethan comedy.

Conclusion

The comic, in many ways, allows people an outside vantage point of their own cultural beliefs and power structures. It satirically points out the instabilities, ambiguities, and contradictions woven into the social fabric: what is presumed to be proper morality and social behaviour and how these expectations are perpetually threatened and thwarted. As I have discussed, the sexual, misogynistic, and scatological jests of early modern England are largely concerned with "outsider" figures who do not conform to standards of decency. These jokes can function conservatively by mocking fools who are unable or unwilling to control their vulgar lust, aggression, and bodily functions. These gags can also function subversively by celebrating those characters who behave boorishly and unsociably, but who are witty enough to succeed; by doing so, they reveal strategies of superseding the cultural codes of conduct (although restricted to the imagination of the audience).

Heywood's comic interludes are similar to jests in that they expose social foibles and absurdities. At the same time, they offer his audience an outsider view of jests themselves. First, Heywood exploits the many ways that live performance goes beyond printed and oral jokes, in effect exposing their limitations. He vividly enacts the bawdiness instead of merely telling it, captivating spectators with lewd sights and sounds. Second, he explores the act of jesting in that the comical stories shared by his characters are much more than simply entertaining. They also show the various social uses of joking, such as gaining the favour of others or attacking rivals through drollery. Moreover, Heywood's jesting situations realistically reflect the individual storytellers: the subjects that they select as humorous and their unique oratory styles allow a glimpse into these characters' personalities, moral weaknesses, and unconscious motivations.

A broad theme that I have developed throughout this study involves the ongoing tradition of bawdy humour, which manifests itself in a variety of historical genres: the same stock characters and plots were recycled in ancient oral fables, exempla, fabliaux, novelle, and French farces. Heywood and jest writers then updated the basic gags of these older models by implanting familiar, "English" settings, personages, and slang. We can see the same trend continuing in modern times. Many of the same social codes, assumptions, and tensions have been passed down to us. Thus, we laugh at humour that sports with and shocks our enduring conceptions of acceptable versus deviant behaviour. For example, the prospect of kissing another person's ass, smelling another's fart, and eating another's shit continues to be delightfully revolting and insulting because we feel much the same shame over our lower bodies. Adultery jests are also common today due to abiding masculine anxieties, yet the particular forms of these tales are newly fashioned. The cuckold figure, with his telling horns, has largely passed into obscurity as a shared symbol of patriarchal shame and weakness; we have adopted new symbols and ludicrous character types that have more cultural meaning for us, but ones that act in the traditionally absurd manner. As Joy Wiltenburg notes, "old jokes are retold only as long as someone laughs" (41).

The spry tradition of Heywood's interludes also lives on in today's popular comedies. A number of recent, adult-oriented cartoons, for example, take standard jokes and embellish them with over-the-top visual and auditory features. Programs such as *Beavis & Butthead*, *Ren & Stimpy*, and *The Simpsons* "animate" jest humour in ways that cannot be mimicked by reading or telling an anecdote, and not even by live performance. *South Park* is perhaps the raciest of these cartoons, shocking viewers with characters and scenarios that very deliberately question prevalent notions of taste and obscenity: foul-mouthed fourth-graders, flatulent Canadians, homosexual pets, a promiscuous chef who bursts into erotic song, a talking turd who spreads the spirit of Christmas, to name only a few. Yet for all these bizarrely creative details, the humour behind *South Park* is timeless. Like early modern jestbooks and like Heywood's plays, such adult cartoons rely on the eternal power of bawdy topics to degrade, arouse, startle, anger, inform, and especially delight people.

Notes

Introduction

[1] Laughter and humour do not necessarily go hand in hand. For instance, one does not have to laugh to "get" a joke, and there are numerous examples of laughter as a response to non-humorous situations, such as when one is tickled or feels nervous. For the purposes of this paper—analyzing stories that are comical by design—"laughter" refers loosely to an audience's favourable response to a joke. I leave it as generally understood that recognizing and appreciating humour often, but not always, leads to physically grinning, chuckling, and so forth.

[2] Unlike Freud, I do not distinguish between "jest" and "joke."

[3] I do not, for example, refer to modern humour studies by sociologists, linguists, and psychologists. Johan Verberckmoes offers a useful bibliography of humour research divided by historical period and by academic field (Verberckmoes 242-252).

Chapter One

[1] Wilson gives credit for this definition to Ernst Schulz's *Die englischen Schwankbucher*. Similar to Wilson, I look solely at books of this nature, and not with single jests found in other works, collections that mix humorous and serious topics, or comic verse. A number of jestbooks in verse were published during the period, including *The Wydow Edyth* (1525), that involve similar character types and plots as the prose collections. I have chosen not to include these verse collections in this study for the sake of brevity, not because of thematic differences.

[2] Hines counts nearly a third of the one hundred stories to be thematically related to the fabliaux, although with a more refined description of sexual acts. Most of these stories are grouped under Days 3, 7, 8, and 9 (Hines 230-232).

[3] Barry Sanders credits Chaucer with writing "the first *joke* in the English language" (167) with "The Miller's Tale." Sanders argues that, besides the obvious humour in the anecdote, it achieves joke status because of the framing narrative. The Miller shares this the story about a foolish, cuckolded carpenter in order to strike out at his rival, the Reeve, who is also a carpenter (and probably a cuckold): "When the Miller finishes, the pilgrims all howl with laughter—all but the Reeve, who curses and swears [. . .]. He [the Miller] has backed the Reeve into one of society's most feared corners, forcing him to play the butt of a joke" (177).

[4] For a more thorough treatment of the foreign sources of English jestbooks before 1640, F.P. Wilson recommends Ernst Schulz's *Die englischen Schwankbucher* (1912) and Douglas Bush's "Some Sources for the *Mery Tales, Wittie Questions, and Quicke Answeres*" (1923).

[5] Beatrice refers to *A Hundred Merry Tales* in *Much Ado about Nothing*: "That I was disdainful, and that I had my good wit out of the "Hundred Merry Tales"—well, this was Signior Benedick that said so" (2.1.129-131). John Wardroper explains that the "jibe" in these lines is that Beatrice "borrowed her wit, and from such an old book, dating from 1526; not that the book was poor" (4).

[6] In the first and third volumes of Hazlitt's *Old English Jestbooks*, the pagination begins at "1" for each separate jestbook. In Volume 3, for example, there are seven Page #1's, Page #2's, and so forth. The page numbers in Volume 2 proceed normally.

[7] Since Aristotle, jests have been distinguished by whether they involve things said or things done. In *The Book of the Courtier*, Castiglione has three categories: "the long narrative, urbane and amusing, that tells how something turned out; the other, the sudden and sharp readiness of a single phrase. But we will add a third sort called practical jokes, in which both long narrative and short sayings find their place, and sometimes action as well" (147). Obviously, jokes about things said—witty sayings, quick punch lines, puns, and wordplay—benefited most by being condensed and sharpened.

[8] See Appendix for a more thorough breakdown of these seventeen jestbooks and their lewd content.

[9] Widows are the exception. They are commonly portrayed as having an insatiable appetite for sex (having already enjoyed intercourse with their deceased husbands), and thus they seduce typically younger men to feed this lust. Lisa Jardine explains that in addition to this "threatening sexuality," widows were considered dangerous because of their "fiscal independence"—their inheritance allowed them power, although limited within a patrilinear system, to choose their future mates. Because many men viewed this freedom as yet another female disruption of social tranquility, the widow becomes "the paramount emblem of all that men cannot deal with in women" (128-129).

[10] Messer Bernado Bibbiena, the expert who offers the most advice on jesting in the Second Book, responds laughingly that these women who enjoy indecent stories are not the "'virtuous ladies who deserve reverence and honor from every gentlemen'" (167).

[11] Throughout his three volumes of jestbooks, Hazlitt passes moral judgement by editing out certain words, such as "whore," "fart," "arse," and "turd," and even suppresses entire jests that he deems "too gross for publication."

[12] The remainder of Tale #17 is highly interesting in the study of early modern attitudes towards race and gender. On the night that the young man and his boy mistress are to have sex for the first time, the rogue instead gets the man senselessly drunk and places "a blacke Moore wench" (33) in bed with him. When "the good Woodcocke" awakes the next morning, he is horrified in the belief that he has slept with this Other: he runs "out into another chamber, crying that he was undone, for he had lien with the ugliest thing that euer was, and he feared it was the deuill" (33-34). The Moorish woman was perceived as sexually deviant and terrifying, a hellish abomination to be avoided by any respectable Englishmen. Elliot H.

Tokson explains that this was also a popular depiction of the erotic black woman on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage:

> A woman, then, Moorish or not, must be white to qualify for a white man's love. A Caucasian male who seeks to break this cultural pattern separating the races—that is, by seeking a serious attachment with a black woman—can only debase himself and his race. [. . .] On a level of animal sexuality, a white man could be thought capable of engaging a black woman; but even then, the man was portrayed as corrupt." (93)

Chapter Two

[1] These also include *The Pardoner and the Frere*, *The Play of the Wether*, and *A Play of Love. The Foure PP* was most likely printed at around the same time, although the first existing edition did not appear until c.1544. *Witty and Witless* was never printed, yet it did circulate in manuscript form. There is no conclusive agreement among modern scholars, but many believe that *Gentleness and Nobility*, printed in c.1526, was also written by Heywood (Axton and Happe 4). I have not analyzed *Gentleness and Nobility* in this study.

[2] Heywood married into a prominent family, and his own descendants also led significant lives. His sons Jasper and Ellis were two of the most prominent Jesuits in England during the Elizabethan age (Bolwell 65), and his daughter Elizabeth gave birth to the famous poet John Donne.

[3] John Rastell's son William (who remained a devout Catholic) was the first to publish Heywood's interludes, as well as More's *Workes* in 1557.

[4] In 1525 John Rastell printed *The Wydow Edyth*, a collection of jests in verse based on the trickery and lies of this sly heroine. While *Edyth* does not have the same renown as *A Hundred Merry Tales*, it represents yet another jesting influence on Heywood from his father-in-law.

[5] There is not complete agreement, however: Axton and Happe hold that the play was written around the mid-1520s because it mentions Will Somers, a professional fool whom they argue first appeared in Henry VIII's court around 1525.

[6] Around the twelfth century, Marcolphus transformed in stories from a sly wit into a buffoonish fool. He thus provided the basis for Til Eulenspiegel in the late fifteenth century, who (as noted) developed into Howleglas in later English jokes. The original title page for *Howleglas* borrowed the same woodcut from the first English edition (c.1492) of the Marcolphus and Solomon stories (Zall, A Hundred Merry Tales 4, 152).

[7] It is important to stress again the uncertain date of *The Play of the Wether* in relation to the other interludes. Johnson holds that whether it followed the other debates is "a tenuous assumption, but there can be little doubt that it is superior to both *Witty* and *Love*" (81). Axton and Happe argue that "It is the most ambitious in scale of the interludes," (47) including Heywood's farces.

[8] A "glyster" is a suppository. Mery Report's meaning is that the Gentylman's face will replace his apothecary and thus help him to "ease" his bowels.

[9] These "miracles" are found in *La farce nouvelle du Paste*, but some or all may have been familiar to Heywood and his audience through jests (similar to the Pardoner's ploy in *The Pardoner and the Frere*). Tale #114 of Taylor's *Wit and Mirth*, for instance, describes a scenario similar to Syr Johan's first miracle: a sailor returns home from a three-year voyage to discover that his wife has given birth to a twenty-month old baby. When he asks "whose childe is this," she responds, "it is mine, and God sent it me in your absence" (74). The danger that a man faced in leaving his wife unsupervised for a period of time was the source of many similar gags.

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Appendix: Types of Jests

Type I: jests involving cuckoldry; husbands suspicious of their wives' honesty; the term "cuckold" used as an insult; premarital sex; lecherous men, wives, widows, clergymen, and so forth; naive girls unwittingly revealing their sexual lusts

Type II: jests attacking women and wives as shrewish, domineering, uncaring, and/or disagreeable. Some jests point out a particular shortcoming in women, such as their vanity, while others depict females as generally evil without going into specifics.

Type III: jests involving defecating, often accidentally or as part of some prank; eating or touching excrement; breaking wind; urinating; exposing body parts, often the buttocks; characters scornfully inviting others to kiss their backside.

Not all the jestbooks number their contents, although I have done so here.

Although many jests contain elements of two or more types, I have listed them in the following based only on the dominant type. Thus, each jest below is counted only once.

- William Caxton, *The Fables of Alfonce and Poge* (1484)
  Total Jests: 26 (*Alfonce* = 12; *Poge* = 14)
  Type I: 7 (*Alfonce* #10, 11, 12; *Poge* #1, 2, 8, 12)
  Type II: 0
  Type III: 1 (*Poge* #3)

- *A Hundred Merry Tales* (1526)
  Total Jests: 100
  Type I: 18 (#2, 3, 6, 12, 25, 26, 28, 42, 43, 46, 49, 58, 64, 68, 72, 76, 87, 100)
  Type II: 8 (#10, 19, 21, 62, 63, 66, 87, 97)
  Type III: 5 (#23, 29, 32, 38, 39)

- *Howleglas* (c.1528)
  Total Jests: 47
  Type I: 2 (#20, 24)
  Type II: 1 (#44)
  Type III: 12 (#7, 11, 12, 14, 16, 23, 27, 29, 38, 39, 44, 45)

- *Tales and Quicke Answers* (1567)
  Total Jests: 143 (the original c.1535 edition contains only 113 jests)
  Type I: 11 (#5, 14, 17, 18, 40, 44, 65, 73, 74, 76, 99)
  Type II: 7 (#8, 10, 21, 49, 55, 71, 81)
  Type III: 11 (#11, 18, 28, 36, 49, 66, 80, 89, 95, 101, 120)

- *Merry Tales Made by Master Skelton* (1567)
  Total Jests: 15
  Type I: 2 (#6, 7)

Type II: 1 (#12)
Type III: 2 (#9, 13)

- Thomas Deloney, *The Mirrour of Mirth* (1583)
  Total Jests: 39
  Type I: 5 (#3, 4, 11, 24, 26)
  Type II: 2 (#6, 36)
  Type III: 4 (#10, 22, 23, 27)

- *The Cobbler of Canterbury* (1590)
  Total Jests: 6
  Type I: 5 (#1, 2, 3, 5, 6)
  Type II: 0
  Type III: 0

- *Pasquils Jests, mixed with Mother Bunches Merriments* (1604)
  Total Jests: 51 (plus 12 Gull Tales)
  Type I: 7 (#17, 19, 23, 45, 50, 9th Gull Tale, 10th Gull Tale)
  Type II: 5 (#8, 13, 30, 33, 43)
  Type III: 7 (#6, 9, 16, 26, 29, 48, 6th Gull Tale)

- George Wilkins and Thomas Dekker, *Jests to Make You Merry* (1607)
  Total Jests: 60
  Type I: 14 (#2, 6, 8, 13, 23, 25, 35, 43, 45, 47, 55, 56, 58, 59)
  Type II: 5 (#28, 31, 44, 50, 52)
  Type III: 1 (#5)

- *Certayne Conceyts and Jeasts* (1614)
  Total Jests: 37
  Type I: 7 (#7, 11, 24, 25, 31, 34, 35)
  Type II: 2 (#5, 14)
  Type III: 0

- *Tarlton's Jests* (1611)
  Total Jests: 71
  Type I: 10 (#9, 10, 11, 20, 25, 30, 58, 59, 61, 67)
  Type II: 4 (#19, 29, 50, 53)
  Type III: 5 (#42, 44, 52, 56, 62)

- Andrew Borde, *The Jests of Scogin* (1626, first published c.1565)
  Total Jests: 76
  Type I: 2 (#50, 52)
  Type II: 2 (#26, 27)
  Type III: 11 (#8, 12, 23, 24, 28, 30, 40, 41, 63, 66, 69)

- John Taylor, *Wit and Mirth* (1629)

Total Jests: 137
Type I: 17 (#14, 31, 32, 36, 37, 39, 43, 51, 53, 54, 55, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119)
Type II: 5 (#88, 104, 105, 109, 113)
Type III: 3 (6, 48, 101)

- Andrew Borde, *The Merry Tales of the Mad Men of Gotham* (1630, but probably first printed during the reign of Henry VIII)
  Total Jests: 20
  Type I: 1 (#13)
  Type II: 2 (#12, 19)
  Type III: 0

- H.L., *Gratiae Ludentes* (1638)
  Total Jests: 210 (#58 contains five shorter jokes that I count separately as #58 a, b, c,
  Type I: 21 (#14, 17, 25, 27, 58b, 58c, 86, 105, 108, 110, 112, 120, 125, 132, 153, 167, 177, 179, 190, 191, 205)
  Type II: 8 (#58a, 107, 113, 119, 155, 166, 169, 172)
  Type III: 11 (#58d, 61, 78, 83, 133, 142, 144, 153, 175, 186, 198)

- Robert Chamberlain, *Conceits, Clinches, Flashes, and Whimzies* (1639)
  Total Jests: 287
  Type I: 31 (#4, 28, 32, 36, 40, 45, 100, 105, 136, 171, 172, 185, 187, 192, 219, 231, 234, 242, 245, 249, 262, 263, 270, 271, 273, 276, 278, 280, 284, 285, 286)
  Type II: 20 (#5, 27, 56, 66, 69, 71, 72, 74, 77, 81, 92, 111, 124, 145, 162, 166, 167, 181, 213, 247)
  Type III: 7 (#63, 85, 122, 123, 124, 232, 274)

- *The Sack-Full of Newes* (1673, first published c.1557)
  Total Jests: 22
  Type I: 3 (#1, 3, 15)
  Type II: 0
  Type III: 2 (#20, 21)